

Cheerios

Company Background

When General Mills first introduced Cheerios on June 19, 1941, it was the first oat-based ready-to-eat breakfast cereal. Several fruit and chocolate varieties have since supplemented the original, confirming the brand's continuing popularity. The world's sixth largest food company isn't just known for making iconic products such as its distinctive O-shaped cereal. Minnesota-based General Mills also has a long history of philanthropy, with its foundation having given more than \$420 million to non-profits since its founding.

Objective

In November 2009, Cheerios ran a campaign on Facebook designed to deepen its relationship with its key demographic of mothers with young children. The campaign centered around encouraging more people to connect to the Cheerios Facebook Page – the free public profile that enables companies to share their business and products with Facebook users on an ongoing basis. Cheerios' Facebook campaign was grounded in the General Mills' philanthropic tradition. Cheerios promised to donate a free book to First Book, which distributes books to children in need, for every new person who connected to the Cheerios Facebook Page.

"We wanted to strengthen our role as a relevant and trusted partner for Generation Y moms," says Greta Hanson, Cheerios' Promotions Marketing Manager.

"We think Facebook is a great platform for us to

"I feel that Facebook can build really strong brand equity for Cheerios and deepen the feelings that people have for it. It's definitely a game-changer in the way we reach and talk to our consumers."



Facebook Executive Summary

Client:

The Cheerios logo, featuring the word "Cheerios" in a bold, sans-serif font with a small orange dot above the 'i', set against a yellow rectangular background.

Objective: Growing the number of people who have connected to Cheerios' Facebook Page

Solution: Running a series of ads targeted at young mothers, emphasizing Cheerios' heritage, nutritional benefits, and commitment to philanthropy

Key Lessons:

- By mounting a Facebook campaign and employing Facebook's targeting capabilities, Cheerios was able to reach and engage its key demographic – Generation Y moms with young children
- Cheerios was able to create a community on Facebook through a marketing campaign that reinforced its commitment to philanthropy and healthful food
- The company can keep the brand top-of-mind by using the publishing capabilities on its Page to furnish its community with fresh and relevant content

Jeff Hingher, Marketing Manager, Cheerios

start a conversation with them. It helps us build authenticity and transparency, and stay agile in addressing those issues they discuss in the social space, versus more traditional touch-points, where you don't have the same flexibility in terms of messaging."

Approach

On November 5, 2009, Cheerios ran a type of media buy on Facebook's homepage called a "reach block", which guaranteed that Cheerios would reach its target audience over a 24-hour period. The company took advantage of Facebook's anonymized targeting to direct its message to its key demographic of women over 25 years old.

Cheerios featured four different Premium Page Ads with two encouraging people to connect with the Page to "help donate a free book" and other similar messages around the First Book initiative. Those ads included an image of a smiling toddler reading a book. The other two stressed the healthful qualities of the cereal, saying "Cheerios keeps it real" and highlighting that the cereal contains no artificial flavors or colors. "As well as starting the conversation, it was about keeping the brand top-of-mind by publishing relevant content that we know moms are interested in," says Greta. "Hopefully they would see Cheerios in a new and refreshed light."

Results

- The Cheerios Facebook Page had 8,854 people connected to it on November 4, 2009, the day before the campaign began. By the end of November 5, the day the reach block ran, it had 133,129 – an increase of nearly 1,500 percent
- The engagement rate was 0.19 percent – the highest recorded by General Mills at that time
- There were approximately 84.5 million total delivered impressions
- Since the reach block, over 200,000 people have connected to Cheerios' Facebook Page
- More than 124,000 books were donated to First Book by Cheerios as a result of people connecting to the Cheerios' Facebook Page

Future

Cheerios intends to continue to grow its fan base via Facebook and maintain a high-impact presence through its Facebook Page forum, which allows Cheerios to determine what its consumers are interested in and to tailor content accordingly. “We’ve spent some time upfront establishing our voice and tonality, so that while we might not always have overt marketing messages, there’s a distinct feel for what the brand is all about,” says Cheerios Marketing Manager Jeff Hingher. “Consumers already have an intimate connection to the Brand and want to be affiliated with it, and Facebook is the perfect platform for them to do so and express that loyalty.”

Greta says Facebook has given the brand another way of staying current with the conversation. “The beauty of Facebook in terms of our core target of Generation Y moms is that we can deliver content and messaging that we can’t deliver in traditional media, and we can keep our conversation fresh and relevant in terms of what our target is talking about on popular parenting or blogging sites,” says Greta. “Being able to capture that and deliver it back the following day has sparked a lot of interest and favorable response from our community.”

Cheerios says that it’s developing a role for the cereal that goes beyond providing cereal. By partnering with its fans, the company will be able to tap into the collective intelligence of thousands

Feed a curious mind. ✕



Specially marked Cheerios boxes have a free children's book inside. Yet another ingredient essential to your child's complete health.

223,898 people like **Cheerios**.

 Like

Cheerios keeps it real. ✕



100% natural whole grain oats. Just 1 gram of sugar. No artificial flavors or colors. Simple is good.

223,898 people like **Cheerios**.

 Like

of moms to gather and share parenting ideas with the entire Cheerios community. This is important to the company because it believes that real people saying real things can trump traditional brand messages, especially within social platforms. Its ability to be a catalyst for creating this valuable and authentic content is important to the company.

Jeff adds that Facebook offers Cheerios a new way of communicating with its customers. “I feel that Facebook can build really strong brand equity for Cheerios and deepen the feelings that people have for it,” says Jeff. “It’s definitely a game-changer in the way we reach and talk to our consumers.”



6 MILLION MINUTES READ-A-THON

Make a simple, one-time pledge to read at least 15 minutes a day for 30 days to help us reach our goal by March 15th and we'll donate 250,000 books to First Book.

 **Pledge 15 Minutes A Day**

  **Become a Fan**