

## HOW TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL BRANDING AND SAMPLING FOR NOTHIN' ...THAT'S RIGHT, NOTHIN'

Cape Cod Potato Chips with Jericho Communications

Category 39: Food & Beverage

### OVERVIEW:

Seinfeld (the TV pop icon and comedian) showed viewers that doing nothing can be a good thing, in his runaway hit prime time show about four friends who do "nothing." The nothing theme again struck a chord with consumers when Steve Bernard (founder of Cape Cod Potato Chips) applied it to the highly competitive snack food industry. Bernard sold his company to Anheuser-Busch in 1985, and by the time he purchased it back in 1996, sales had plummeted and distribution outlets had lost interest in the product. A year later, Bernard turned to Jericho Communications to help him rebuild the business that he so strongly believed in. They created the "Thanks for Nothing Seinfeld" promotion, asking Seinfeld viewers to send in nothing but a return address to receive a bag of potato chips to munch on during the much-publicized, must-see final episodes of Seinfeld. Announced through a simple but compelling press release, the witty campaign captured the attention of the media, Seinfeld fans and chip lovers everywhere -- creating a sampling bonanza and skyrocketing Cape Cod Potato Chips back into the number one kettle chip position. Apparently, you can get something for nothing.

### RESEARCH:

Crunchy, premium taste is the primary selling point of Cape Cod Potato Chips, an all-natural quality chip that is worth paying a little extra for. This superior taste differentiates the Cape Cod product (a kettle chip that is carefully cooked from fresh potato slices over a kettle, watched by a real-live person) from big-name household chip brands (which are mass produced on conveyer belts). Research confirmed that once consumers tasted these yummy chips, they were willing to pay the slightly higher price, and they purchased the chips again and again.

So, Bernard knew that the key to rebuilding his company was sampling.

In a second phase of consumer research, the target audiences were identified as baby boomers and television viewers in their 20s and 30s. The demographics of the Seinfeld show were a perfect match with this market.

### PLANNING:

The objectives of the program were to:

- \* Dramatically raise awareness for the Cape Cod Potato Chips brand
- \* Stimulate increased consumer demand for Cape Cod Potato Chips

- \* Generate a sense of fun and excitement among the media and consumers about the Cape Cod Potato Chips company

To do this, the following strategies were employed:

- \* Create widespread publicity about a compelling Cape Cod Potato Chip promotion that gives consumers something for nothing
- \* Offer free snack samples that reacquaint past customers with and introduce a new generation of chip eaters to the delicious taste of Cape Cod potato chips
- \* Develop a news story that captures the attention of the must-see TV audience by tying into "Seinfeld," one of prime time's hottest shows

Cape Cod Potato Chips' target audiences were:

- \* Television viewers in their 20s and 30s
- \* Baby boomers
- \* National, regional and local consumer-oriented press (both print and broadcast), as conduits to above audiences

#### EXECUTION:

The campaign was nothing -- just a simple, one-page press release announcing the "Thanks for Nothing Seinfeld" promotion, which was distributed by mail and fax to a select list of newspapers, magazines, wire services, television and radio outlets nationwide. The magic of this publicity campaign resided in its core strategy and execution. The creative strategy was to tap into the Seinfeld-is-going-off-the-air! buzz, as well as the popular "nothing" theme of the show. The promotion reached a large segment of the company's target audiences who were already excited about Seinfeld-related happenings. All they had to do was send in nothing (but a return address) to get something (a free bag of chips to munch on during those last shows). The promotion about nothing bid farewell to a show about nothing, in honor of that great "nothing" irony. The playfully chic writing style of the press release was also well-received and appreciated by the media.

The powerful, precise campaign delivered tremendous public relations value for a very minimal budget of \$20,000.

#### EVALUATION:

1. Awareness. News of the Cape Cod Potato Chip "Thanks for Nothing Seinfeld" promotion was splashed across the headlines in print and broadcast outlets nationwide. More than 102 million media impressions were generated (exhibits B, C and D), most of which occurred within a three-week time period, including placements in: CNBC "MARKET WRAP," E! "NEWS WEEKEND," MSNBC "MORNING LINE," WNBC "MORNING NEWS," TV FOOD NETWORK "IN FOOD TODAY," ALL NEWS CHANNEL, LOS ANGELES TIMES, BOSTON GLOBE, NEW YORK POST, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, ORLANDO SENTINEL, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER, MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL, COLUMBUS DISPATCH, ARIZONA REPUBLIC, ASSOCIATED PRESS, and UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL.

2. Increased Consumer Demand. As the word spread that people could get something (free chips) for nothing (just a return address), requests poured into the Cape Cod Potato Chip headquarters. Samples of delicious Cape Cod chips were delivered into the hands of 51,283 people. In fact, the consumer reaction was so tremendous that the company had to shut down its standard production for two days in order to reconfigure the packaging system to produce the 3.5-ounce sampling bags; and, had to hire three additional, temporary employees to process the requests. No advertising was undertaken during this time, so the dramatic rise in consumer demand related directly back to the publicity campaign.

3. Fun and Excitement. Everyone was talking about the final episode of Seinfeld. And, the media had a blast delivering the news of the Cape Cod Potato Chip "Thanks for Nothing Seinfeld" promotion. Tongue-in-cheek references filled the newspapers and airwaves. One anchor ended a segment saying, "That's an interesting way [for Cape Cod Potato Chips] to chip in." Another commented, "Nothing for nothing...all for nothing. As Seinfeld would say, 'Not that there's anything wrong with that.'" One syndicated newspaper columnist wrote: "In a farewell gesture as oddballish as a Seinfeld plot, Cape Cod Potato Chips company will turn something into nothing." And, UPI summed up with, "Here's a thought -- send some people a reply that reads, 'No chips for you!'"

Consumers definitely had fun, which is illustrated by Nicole Bernard's (Director of Marketing) comments about replies to the promotion: "We received all sorts of creative forms of nothing...from blank computer discs to voided checks to fake money and empty bags. Someone even sent in a big empty box with 'Nothing' written in black marker on the bottom. It's been fantastic!"

The "Thanks for Nothing" promotion created a sampling bonanza, as the idea surged beyond its original scope. When Seinfeld's publicist heard about the campaign, she requested t-shirts and chips for the entire crew and studio audience. And, as a result of the press coverage, MTV's Love Line struck a deal with Cape Cod Potato Chips to offer chip samples to its studio audience for an entire season (and another 3,000 people munched away.) So it's really true, you can get something for nothing!

## SUMMARY STATEMENT

### CAPE COD POTATO CHIPS

#### "THANKS FOR NOTHING SEINFELD" SAMPLING BONANZA

Everybody loves to get something for nothing, and the Cape Cod Potato Chips company used this quirk of humanity to its advantage. When faced with diminishing sales and floundering brand loyalty, the snack food entrepreneur created the "Thanks for Nothing Seinfeld" campaign. The promotion helped Seinfeld fans bid farewell to a show about "nothing" by asking them to send in nothing (but a return address) for something (a bag of potato chips to munch on during the much-publicized final episodes of the show). Announced through a simple but craftily written press release, the witty campaign captured the attention of the press, Seinfeld fans and chip lovers everywhere. Media

impressions topped 102 million and a sampling bonanza placed scrumptious chip snacks into the hands of nearly 55,000 consumers -- ultimately skyrocketing Cape Cod Potato Chips back into the number one kettle chip position. All for nothing but the minimal cost of a single press release!