

*A Canadian First: Cementing Listerine's Position in the Oral Hygiene Routine*

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**NEED/OPPORTUNITY** / The 2006 goal for Listerine mouthwash (LMW) was to exceed 50 percent category share by encouraging Canadians to include LMW as part of their oral hygiene routines. This was a challenging task as the brand had been the market leader for several years and was also well-known for its gingivitis-fighting benefits. However, LMW was still not part of Canadians' regular oral care routines. It was clear the team needed to reposition the brand and elevate the need to use LMW as part of the daily oral care routine.

Extensive research—gathered with the client—revealed three core points:

1. **Reason to believe.** LMW's unique selling point is that it is the only over-the-counter mouthwash to fight gingivitis—the earliest stage of gum disease. However, further education was required as more than half of Canadians have gingivitis, yet only 6 percent recognize it. Also, a quantitative survey revealed 100 percent of dental professionals were aware of the powerful link between oral health and overall health (i.e., gum disease may be potentially linked to other diseases such as diabetes and heart disease). However, only 37 percent of these professionals recommended adding a rinse to the oral care routine. So, the integral role that oral health plays in our overall health became the motivator for the message.
2. **How?** Once the team established *why* Canadians should act, they needed to show them *how*. To encourage a change in behaviour from the standard “brush-floss” routine, the team needed to clearly communicate the message of “brush-floss-rinse” as the new gold standard in oral care.
3. **Which rinse?** To ensure LMW ownership, the team had to credibly communicate the following key message: Long-term studies show LMW to be the safest, most effective over-the-counter rinse that reduces/prevents plaque and gingivitis by up to 34 percent more than a routine without it.

Despite clinical data showing its benefits, both consumers and dental professionals still saw Listerine as “optional” versus a “necessary” part of the daily oral care routine. It was this mindset that was the opening—the golden opportunity to prove to the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) that rinsing *should* be part of the oral care routine. And once they won CDHA approval, consumers would follow.

**INTENDED AUDIENCE** / Research helped to identify two key target audiences:

1. **Health-conscious Canadian consumers ages 25 to 54, with higher-than-average income.**  
Sales data indicated the average Canadian was not rinsing on a regular basis. So what would incite them to do so? Data revealed that overall health implications were the biggest oral health motivator, yet only 60 percent of consumers were aware of the link between oral care and overall health. Knowing these target consumers are much more likely to rely on information from news articles than advertising when making a purchase decision (71 percent versus 49 percent), media were identified as the vehicle for the message.
2. **Dental hygienists.** Dental professional recommendations are another key driver for over-the-counter mouthwash use, with more than 1.4 million made per month in Canada. As the category leader, LMW was the most-recommended mouthwash in Canada, yet its rate of recommendation paled in comparison to flossing and proper brushing (rinsing was at 37 percent, while flossing was at 90 percent and proper brushing at 86 percent).

Dental hygienists were selected as the professional target, since this group recommends mouthwash to significantly more patients per month than dentists (56 per month versus 39 per month). In addition, hygienists spend more time than dentists discussing oral hygiene recommendations with their patients. Therefore, dental hygienists—via the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association—were a natural core professional target, and became the conduit for reaching Canadian consumers.

**GOAL AND OBJECTIVES** / Working closely with the client, Environics established a primary goal: to drive market share beyond 50 percent via increased use of LMW. From this goal, they set three specific objectives:

1. Establish a new oral hygiene routine in Canada: Brush, floss and rinse with LMW.
2. Communicate the brush-floss-rinse (LMW) message via media relations and dental professional outreach.

Target earned impressions: 10 million (at a cost of CAN\$3.00 per 1,000 impressions), with 75 percent of coverage containing brand/key messages.

3. Client satisfaction with the success of program (to be determined subjectively by the client).

**SOLUTION OVERVIEW** / To be successful, it was essential that the message resonated with each of the two target audiences. The overriding strategy was to elevate the brand's current relationship with the CDHA to establish a new oral care routine for Canadians: brush, floss and rinse. Not an easy task as the team would be challenging the gold standard of oral care (brush-floss). Recognizing that research would be key to success, Environics came up with the idea of grounding the campaign in a core, research-based

document—an official “Call to Action” outlining both the motivation (oral-overall health links) and process (brush-floss-rinse) for achieving optimal oral health. This research would satisfy hygienists’ need to ground their recommendations in science, and the “Call to Action” itself gave the team “new news” to share with consumer media and, ultimately, Canadians.

#### THE ELEMENTS

- 1. Strong alliance:** Since 2004, LMW has partnered with the CDHA. This year’s challenge, however, would take this relationship to a deeper level. To reposition the brand as part of the everyday oral care routine, a credible foundation had to be built. So the team once again united with the CDHA, who independently reviewed current data on oral-overall health links and the incremental benefits of rinsing. Maintaining an arms-length position, Environics worked with the CDHA to establish the research review parameters, ensure credibility and manage the overall process. To further reinforce this new oral care routine, the team also successfully approached the federal government to recognize the connection between oral health and overall health.
- 2. The right tools:** A detailed analysis by the CDHA of rinsing research established the need for a brush-floss-rinse routine. However, it would be challenging to communicate countless pages of detailed clinical data to the average Canadian. This is why Environics worked with the CDHA to create a consumer-friendly “Call to Action”—a simple, one-page outline of this new oral care routine. Summarizing the research, the “Call to Action” outlined the CDHA’s new official oral hygiene routine: dental checkups, brushing, flossing and rinsing with an essential oil anti-septic mouth rinse (LMW). To encourage this new routine with Canadian patients, the “Call to Action” and all of the independently-conducted rinsing research—which found LMW to be the safest, most effective product available in Canada—was published in the *Canadian Journal of Dental Hygiene* (June 2006). All CDHA members were consulted for their input during the review process to ensure peer buy-in to the process. The “Call to Action” was disseminated to hygienists across Canada via member e-mails, the CDHA web site and its official journal.
- 3. The right voices:** Keeping credibility top-of-mind, the team worked closely with the CDHA to identify influential hygienists in five target markets to bring the story to life with media. They crafted key messages and conducted comprehensive media briefing sessions to ensure LMW branding was integrated seamlessly and authoritatively during the interview process.
- 4. Media mind-set:** Public relations was the only driver to reposition LMW as part of today’s oral care routine. Attention-grabbing media materials and aggressive media relations played an integral role in amplifying the message. Media kits—which included a news release, rinsing research fact sheet and a copy of the “Call to Action”—were distributed to key health and lifestyle media across Canada. A news release was disseminated over the newswire and via e-mail to a targeted contact list. B-roll—featuring interviews with leading dental hygienists and educators—was also created and distributed via satellite to increase TV coverage beyond the core markets. The result? Sixty-two interviews, articles and broadcast hits—a 44 percent increase over the previous year. More than three hours of coverage were secured on key broadcast outlets across Canada,

including CITY TV, Global Television, CTV, CBC and A-Channel, to name a few. Powerful print coverage was secured in the *Calgary Herald*; *Edmonton Journal*; *TV Hebdo*; Montreal's *The Gazette*; Regina, Saskatchewan's *Leader-Post*; and Vancouver, British Columbia's *The Province*.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES /

- ▶ **Dollars and sense:** The LMW/CDHA “Call to Action” budget was CAN\$150,000 (fees and expenses), so the team had to be cost-effective to ensure their ambitious goals were reached. They created efficiencies by working closely with the CDHA to source spokespeople, conducting highly-targeted media relations, leveraging current CDHA communication vehicles for member outreach and working with the client’s sales staff to cement the dental professional message.
- ▶ **Why use it?** From dental professionals to consumers, most Canadians were aware that LMW fights gingivitis. But the biggest hurdle was that people hadn’t made the connection of why it was important to use LMW (for example, that they likely have gingivitis and the oral-overall health links). To make the brand an integral part of the oral care routine, Environics had to elevate the brand from optional to necessary use. For their efforts to be deemed a success, this would have to resonate in communications to all audiences.
- ▶ **Balanced branding:** The team knew LMW-specific branding in the “Call to Action” could diminish its credibility in the eyes of CDHA members, media and consumers. So they needed to ensure balance and validity during the entire research process. While the lengthy rinsing research review recommended LMW by name as the most effective and safe mouthwash, the “Call to Action” was not overtly branded. This subtle brand reference—communicated via media materials and spokespeople—resulted in 100 percent branded media coverage.

**MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION /** The “Call to Action” announcement exceeded all measurable objectives:

**Goal: Grow beyond 50 percent share by educating about the need for a stronger oral care routine.**

LMW’s market share was 52.7 percent four weeks after the announcement, which surpassed the 50 percent share goal—a significant increase given the brand’s market leader status.

1. Establish a new gold standard oral hygiene routine in Canada: Brush, floss and rinse with LMW.
  - ▶ CDHA officially endorsed LMW as the safest and most effective oral rinse. This research review was the cover story of the *Canadian Journal of Dental Hygiene*, with the “Call to Action” claiming centerfold placement.
  - ▶ Stamp of approval: Canada’s federal minister of health, Tony Clement, publicly reinforced the magnitude of this condition saying, “Gingivitis is both preventable and reversible, so I would like to commend the CDHA for educating Canadians on this important health issue.”

- ▶ Meter moved: A post-“Call to Action” CDHA member poll revealed:

Seventy-four percent are now aware that a routine including LMW reduces gingivitis more than a routine without it (versus 37 percent prior to the “Call to Action”).

Eighty-seven percent intended to use the “Call to Action” in conversations on oral-systemic links and the new brush-floss-rinse routine.

Twenty-one percent more hygienists said they would start recommending rinsing as part of their gold standard routine.

2. Communicate the brush-floss-rinse (LMW) message via media relations and dental professional outreach. Target earned impressions: 10 million (cost of CAN\$3.00 per 1,000 impressions), with 75 percent of coverage containing branding/key messages.

- ▶ The team nearly doubled their target, earning 19,745,972 impressions via media relations alone, at a cost of CAN\$0.75 per thousand impressions.
- ▶ Branding/key messages appeared in 100 percent of coverage (many multiples).
- ▶ There were 62 highly credible interviews, articles and broadcast hits—44 percent more than in 2005.
- ▶ There were more than three hours and 15 minutes of radio/TV coverage across Canada (CTV, CBC, Global, A-Channel, CityTV, etc.).

B-roll was picked up in 70 percent of TV coverage.

- ▶ Headline highlights:

“Hygienists hail mouthwash virtues—favoured formulation found in Listerine”  
—*Calgary Herald*

“Rinse your way to healthy gums”—*Leader-Post* (Regina, Saskatchewan)

“Add swish and spit to brush and floss”—*Edmonton Journal*

“Wash out that mouth! Dental hygienists endorse routine use of mouthwash”  
—*Windsor Star*

“New dental question: Are you using...mouthwash?”  
—*The Province* (Vancouver, British Columbia)

“Brush, floss—rinse”—*The Gazette* (Montreal)

- ▶ The brush-floss-rinse LMW message was communicated to hygienists via e-mail, word-of-mouth and provincial affiliates.

- ▶ Environics negotiated 10,000 “Call to Action” copies for distribution to dental professionals across Canada.
3. Client satisfaction with the success of the program (determined subjectively by client).
- ▶ U.S. and other international brand managers are looking to replicate this Canadian initiative.
  - ▶ Positive client feedback confirmed the impact of gingivitis awareness:

“Unbelievable! Great work! Very impressive! You should all feel so proud! This is a week of success.”—Brynn Winegard, Listerine associate brand manager

“Once again I am blown away by the program in its entirety. Thank you so much for putting so much passion and energy into your work—we’ve got an amazing 2006 program because of it.”—Tanya Willer, oral care lead

“Received an e-mail from my colleague in Australia—they will be copying our program and executing the first ever Gingivitis Week over there (including a rinse-off and everything!). Kudos to your team for such a great program!”—Rebecca Singer, Listerine brand manager