The Launch of Catelli Smart Pasta
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NEED/OPTOPORTUNITY / Ronzoni Foods Canada Corporation hired Diana Robinson & Associates in May of 2007 to help launch the new Catelli Smart Pasta. Ronzoni Foods is Canada’s largest pasta maker, with more than 280 employees. Catelli products have a long and distinguished history in Canada with a heritage of innovation, but pasta sales have taken a beating over the past few years, as people have become more concerned with eating healthier. There are two predominant types of pasta—white and whole grain/wheat. White pasta is perceived as less healthy but better tasting than whole grain pasta; many consumers just don’t like the taste, texture and appearance of whole wheat pasta, especially those with fussy eaters in their households. Ronzoni felt there was an opportunity to introduce a product that would offer the best of both worlds. The result: Catelli Smart Pasta. Smart Pasta is an industry first, a delicious white pasta with the fibre benefit of whole wheat that uses inulin as one of the key ingredients to achieve this goal, a new use for this fairly new food ingredient. But Ronzoni also recognized the potential for confusion amongst consumers about the relevance of this new product: How was it different from whole wheat pasta, was it really as nutritious, and more important, did it really taste good?

In development for several years, the new Catelli Smart Pasta is the first pasta product in Canada to use inulin, a naturally occurring carbohydrate extracted from chicory root. Inulin is recognized by Health Canada as a natural, plant-based source of soluble dietary fibre. It is a probiotic fibre, meaning that it is not digested in the stomach or small intestine and reaches the large intestine intact. There it stimulates the growth and metabolic activity of Bifidobacteria and other probiotic bacteria, promoting good digestive health. The biggest advantage of adding inulin to Catelli Smart Pasta is that it has the same great taste as traditional white pasta and provides three times as much fibre. Although the new product provided an opportunity for consumers to gain great health benefits, many would never have heard of inulin. Consumers needed to understand and appreciate the true nutritional benefits it offered in a simple way, and all copy would need to meet Health Canada’s strict nutritional claims regulations. Consumers also needed to understand that the product tasted great and that the fussy eaters in their households would like it. And all of this needed to be done in a way that would be sensitive to Catelli’s other product lines still sold by their retail customers: traditional white pasta and whole grain pasta. Smart Pasta would be on grocery shelves in June 2007 with full distribution by October. At that time, it would be officially launched with a TV ad campaign and a consumer web-driven promotion, both of which were still in development with no creative finalized at the time the PR campaign was created.

A review of the company research done to support the product development provided highly technical information about the product and the use of inulin. Intensive web, magazine, newspaper and broadcast research again revealed little awareness of inulin and its benefits amongst the average consumer. The research revealed that one of the biggest challenges facing consumers, especially parents, was that many
children are fussy eaters. Diana Robinson & Associates decided to find out exactly what Canadians thought about eating healthier and just how many Canadians were fussy eaters. They hired Harris Decima Research to conduct a national survey of 1,000 Canadians to find out how hard it was to get families to eat healthy today and what obstacles they needed to overcome. These answers would provide sound, statistical information to both media and Canadians, and provide a platform for the media relations program.

**INTENDED AUDIENCES /** The target audiences for the program included:

- The general Canadian public, especially females 25–54, skewing toward those with children over the age of six. While mothers are generally the gatekeepers to what a family eats in a home, family likes and dislikes will dictate what she buys. Furthermore, mothers are always looking for fast and cost-effective ways to get their families to eat healthier. Balancing work and family puts time at a premium for these consumers. Weekday meals are difficult to manage as mothers are short on time but want to ensure their families get something nutritious without sacrificing on taste. Mothers are aware of what products are out there that have health benefits, but they are concerned about whether their children will make a fuss if they know it’s healthy. Mothers look for quality products that are delicious and healthy. They believe that white pasta is delicious but essentially “health neutral,” while whole grain pasta is healthy but perceived to be not as tasty. The team’s goal was to get these women to think that with Catelli Smart Pasta you get the best of both worlds—great tasting white pasta that is better for you.

- National consumer media, including print, radio and television news media, especially journalists who cover food, health, wellness and lifestyle issues. The media are a conduit of information for Canadian, and they play a key influencer role with all Canadians since they provide third-party endorsement through their editorials.

- Grocery trade media. Trade media can help generate industry awareness and motivate the grocery trade to list a product.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES /** The objectives for the program were to:

- Develop an integrated communication strategy to inform Canadians about Smart Pasta and its benefits; this strategy would dovetail with the planned fall launch of the TV and web promotion campaigns.

- Motivate the public to search for Smart Pasta in their local grocery store and try it, generating a 10 percent trial.

- Position Ronzoni Foods and Catelli Pasta as experts in the industry, dedicated to providing Canadians with the most up-to-date knowledge about the development of healthy, nutritious, great tasting food.
Ensure that the media receive accurate, complete and timely information about Smart Pasta and generate national, positive media coverage that promotes brand awareness and mentions the brand name and its benefits with a target of 15,000,000 impressions.

Create and deliver a thought-provoking, innovative, educational program on time, and on a very tight budget of less than CAN$90,000, delivering a cost per impression of CAN$0.00 and a return on investment of two to three times the cost.

**SOLUTION OVERVIEW** / Diana Robinson & Associates is an integrated marketing sole proprietorship agency. As such, the organization was responsible for all the initial research, client liaison, strategic development, management and execution of the program. Robinson & Associates brought in suppliers as required (e.g., creative designers, photographers and research companies). The strategy was to create a creative, thought-provoking communication program that would generate awareness, develop support for and create an understanding of the benefits of Catelli Smart Pasta. The team wanted to layer the program to educate consumers about the health benefits of the inulin in the pasta, about how easy it is to integrate eating healthy into their everyday lives and how great-tasting the new pasta is.

**RESEARCH**
Robinson & Associates hired Harris Decima Research to conduct a national, statistically-sound survey of 1,000 Canadians to find out how hard it was to get families to eat healthy and what obstacles needed to be overcome. The team used the results from the national omnibus consumer survey to provide them with statistical information about the obstacles for Canadians to eating healthier every day. They discovered that 67 percent of Canadians say there are obstacles to eating healthier and that 2.1 million Canadians say it’s just too hard to incorporate healthy food into meals. More than 61 percent of Canadian households with children say their children are fussy eaters; in fact, 11 percent of adults say they are fussy eaters. Twenty percent of Canadians say they have no time to look for ways to add healthier foods to their meals.

**THEME**
As the launch date was set for September-October, the team developed the theme, “It’s back to school time and it’s not just the kids getting Smart™…We’re getting Smart about our pasta.” With August, September and October seen as the start of the school year, it’s the time when the whole families get back into the busy, hectic routine of scheduled school hours, activities, appointments and such, after the more relaxed days of summer. The theme allowed the team to play on the back-to-school timing inherent in most media coverage at that time of year. In addition, an especially prevalent topic was the need to get back to making family dinners and preparing fast but nutritious dinners. The theme reflected both of these angles.
KEY MESSAGES
The team aimed to communicate the following key messages through the program:

- Catelli Smart Pasta is a delicious white pasta with the fibre benefit of whole wheat pasta.
- Smart eating means combining great taste with nutrition. Good nutrition begins with eating more fibre, and Catelli Smart Pasta is a delicious way to do it.
- Catelli Smart Pasta offers three times the fibre of traditional white pasta with no trade-offs in taste, texture and appearance.
- Catelli Smart Pasta offers the best of both worlds—great tasting and nutritious white pasta.
- Catelli Smart Pasta was designed with fussy taste buds and finicky eaters in mind.
- Catelli Smart Pasta is a part of The Heart and Stroke Foundation’s Health Check™ program. It meets specific nutrient criteria based on Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating and is an excellent source of fibre, fulfilling one-third of the daily requirement for adults.
- Catelli Smart Pasta uses inulin, a naturally occurring form of sugar produced by plants, as one of its key ingredients. This is a new use for this relatively new food ingredient.
- Catelli Smart Pasta Macaroni, Spaghetti, Spaghettini, Penne Rigate and Rotini are available in the pasta section of your local grocery store and retail for less than CAN$2.00 on average.

IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES / National Consumer Awareness Media Relations Campaign:
The team researched the marketplace to determine current media stories and trends, researched the key audiences, identified the most appropriate and newsworthy angles, and created a media kit. The kit was packaged in an innovative way to attract the attention and interest of the journalist receiving the package. Each media person was sent via courier a box that was personally addressed and had a sticker that said “It’s back-to-school time and it’s not just the kids that are getting Smart…” Packaging the media kit this way allowed the team to break through the clutter and encouraged media to open the package. Inside, media found a custom-created purple backpack embroidered with the Catelli Smart Pasta logo. In the knapsack was a sample of each of the five types of pasta with a media kit tucked into the front pocket.

The generic purple media kit was customized with a sticker on the front cover that said “It’s back-to-school time and it’s not just the kids that are getting Smart…” and included a feature release about the launch of the product and how inulin was an innovative, ground-breaking industry ingredient. The kit also contained a release on tips for creating fast, family friendly, kid-approved dinners from a registered dietician/nutritionist; a fact sheet on survey results; a fact sheet on inulin; a fact sheet on the product; and a Catelli company backgrounder. There were also five recipes included in the kit, three of which had a focus on being kid-friendly. The team also included a CD-ROM containing a group product shot, recipes for each photo and a shot of a chicory root, the source of inulin. They utilized existing photography to keep costs low. All materials were produced in English and French.
Industry expert spokesperson: To ensure that the inulin story was communicated clearly, the team sourced an industry expert, Rob Kowal, who agreed to be a spokesperson on behalf of the Smart Pasta product. Rob is president of his own company, Kriscor & Associates, and is the exclusive Canadian agent for the Sensus Frutafit Inulin being used in the Smart Pasta product. The team included quotations from him in all of the media materials and used him in media interviews where appropriate.

On-air giveaways: In addition, the team created Catelli Smart Pasta gift baskets worth more than CAN$120 retail and sent them out to the top breakfast morning shows across Canada to give away on-air to their viewers. They also contacted select national radio and television media to promote 25 October as World Pasta Day and encouraged them to give away a basket on that day.

Community newspaper matte stories: Community newspapers are an effective vehicle for reaching Canadians, especially in smaller communities. Although their circulation is often smaller than dailies, community newspapers are excellent tools for market penetration because they are more thoroughly read and shared. Since staff and funding are relatively limited at community publications, editors often look for credible, relevant information, which creates an excellent media relations opportunity. To capitalize on this opportunity, the team wrote six News Canada matte articles to support the program initiatives and provided them to all liaisons with News Canada. They utilized Rob Kowal, an industry spokesperson, within several of these articles.

News Canada radio, digital and video news release, and b-roll: The team also created News Canada radio, digital and video news releases to send out to media across Canada. Developed as an editorial story, the release provided a complete story that was journalistic in style for broadcast and web media to use. It included interviews with Rob Kowal and Director of marketing, Karen Scicluna; footage of chicory root being harvested; results from the survey; and scripts adapted for use by local stations. The stories were sent out via satellite in September.

There were four challenges involved in planning and implementing the program:

1. The budget for the program was CAN$89,972 including all fees and expenses, with the largest single costs being the News Canada matte stories, radio, and the digital and video news release that Ronzoni Foods had previously committed to doing in October. There was no room for movement in the timing of the program or the budget. The program needed to be conceived and delivered around these predetermined components. Expenses included all couriers, long distance telephone calls, survey costs, media monitoring, kit development and reproduction of components, etc. The team initially planned to do a spokesperson tour with a registered nutritionist, but the timing of the program conflicted with media openings due to the short time frame, so that part of the program was canceled.

2. The technical nature of inulin needed to be simplified and made easy for consumers to understand so that they could recognize and appreciate the benefits of the new pasta. The team also needed to ensure that all messaging met Health Canada’s strict product claim regulations. Sourcing Rob Kowal allowed them to work with a third-party expert who could provide the technical background in an easily understandable and credible manner. He also could advise on appropriate health claims.
3. The team needed to cut through the plethora of back-to-school and food launches that happen in September and October. They were confined by when the product would be in full distribution—October—so they actually created the programming theme to reflect the timing and designed the media kit to stand out from the clutter.

4. The team needed to create news beyond just the usual, “another new food product.” The survey allowed them to create more newsworthy information, as did identifying inulin as a key information piece for the program. They also developed the program with an eye to providing different kinds of media with the resources they would find most appealing: recipes and photographs, especially kid-friendly ones; innovative industry news; and product-oriented news.

**MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION** The program was an overwhelming success both in terms of the way the product was portrayed, the coverage of the product, the goodwill it generated amongst the trade press, the favourable impressions it left with media and consumers, and the business it generated.

- The program dovetailed with the advertising campaign and consumer web site campaign in terms of timing and carried similar messaging as per the corporate mandate.
- More than 48,764,117 impressions were generated across Canada—more than three times the target.
- More than CAN$589,320 in editorial coverage was generated—an ROI of seven times the total budget, and triple the goal.
- Major, tier 1, national media carried stories, resulting in more than 99 positive stories, all mentioned the brand by name. Coverage included local, regional, national, mainstream and alternative, print, broadcast and web media outlets.
- The program established Ronzoni Foods as an industry expert, and the company has been called upon to comment on other industry issues as a result.
- Each story was dedicated to Catelli Smart Pasta.
- All key messages were communicated.
- All 28 newspaper and magazine stories were accompanied by photographs provided in the media materials.
- Colour pictures ran in several newspapers.
- There was more than 45 minutes of radio and television coverage.
- The cost per media impression was CAN$0.00.
- The cost per media value dollar was CAN$0.00.
- The cost per message point was CAN$0.00.
The program is credited with helping the brand grab 40 percent growth in velocity, three times the expected amount.

The program was implemented on time and CAN$5,000 under budget, at CAN$84,972.

The program was sensitive to Catelli’s other product lines and did not disparage either traditional white pasta or whole wheat pasta.

All messaging met Health Canada regulations for product claims.

Media loved the new pasta and told their readers so.

Consumers loved the new pasta, and projections for this year are 300 percent times higher than originally expected.

Trade sell-in was amongst the easiest ever for Ronzoni sales representatives. Media coverage was used during the selling cycle to indicate public pickup of the brand.