

Concerned Children's Advertisers, Canada

Interview with **Cathy Loblaw**, President and COO, and **Diana Carradine**, Executive Director, Concerned Children's Advertisers, Canada by Barbie Clarke, Editor, and Catherine Gardner, Production Editor, *Young Consumers*

CONCERNED CHILDREN'S Advertisers has been established in Canada for 15 years, and included in the team at its helm are two energetic women who share a passion for their job.

President and COO Cathy Loblaw has been with the CCA for 13 years. 'I was brought in as the CCA had some good commercials which they wanted to evolve and strengthen. I had worked in television and media companies and been involved in charitable projects and current affairs, with an advertising background. My passion in the job is in using the resources of the member companies to give something back to Canadian children.'

Diana Carradine, Executive Director, has been at CCA for three years, and although her work there has always encompassed many aspects of CCA's core business, she has held responsibilities for the social marketing portion of CCA. 'I come from an advertising agency background. My move to CCA reflected my desire to put my advertising experience towards providing messages of social importance to children.'

About Concerned Children's Advertisers

The CCA has set a precedent that is now being copied globally, to help and inform children about the media and the world of advertising.

Cathy Loblaw takes up the story. 'In 1990 a number of companies came together that were

involved in advertising or marketing products or services to children and decided if they wanted to be perceived as being responsible and caring in their interactions with children they should do something about it. CCA is unique as it is the first such organisation which is entirely child-focused and was started with a single-minded aim of contributing to the health and well-being of Canadian children. There were twenty companies involved initially – these are all still member companies with four more as well.' These include food, media and toy companies.

'When CCA first started it wasn't known if it would be a short term initiative that would last a few months or an ongoing programme.' Cathy continues, 'In fact we like to refer to it as a 'good idea that turned into a great idea' and after fifteen years it is more relevant and stronger as an organisation than ever. There is enormous good will and passion about the work of CCA because the member companies enjoy being able to use their skills and resources to contribute something back to Canadian children. The work of the CCA is possible because broadcasters allow free airtime for the PSAs, agencies produce the ads free of charge, and companies that advertising to children support this process. The government is also involved in the initiatives as well as industry experts.'

In order to bring ethics and accountability to marketing to children, CCA has developed a four platform process. These are detailed below.

1. The Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children (Television)

'In Canada, television advertising to children is regulated as a condition of broadcast licence by the CRTC. The Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children contains very specific and mandatory safety guidelines and social values for preparing television commercial messages. A representative committee of advertisers, broadcasters, regulators and parents (including the CCA Executive Director) meet every other week to view all ads aimed at children which must be pre-cleared before broadcast. This committee ensures that every child-directed commercial meets the broadcast code, approved commercials can run for one year, after which time they must be resubmitted to accommodate changing social values.'

2. Canadian Code of Advertising Standards (All media)

'There is a very responsive complaint system in Canada that applies to all media. Only one complaint about a commercial message is required to trigger a review of the ad and possible removal or changes. In addition to supporting these two measures, CCA complements the process through media literacy education and raising awareness of social issues.'

3. Media Literacy Education

'Media can be seen as a 'fifth language' and the CCA aims to teach children how to construct and deconstruct media messages, think critically and watch television safely. This learning is partly through PSAs, and then the learning is extended through free education packs for parents, communities and schools (Grade K to 8). The CCA Educator also makes visits around the country to provide free workshops for parents and schools. Media literacy is a critical part of the CCA as we are very aware that children do not just watch the well-regulated Canadian children's programming, but channels from other countries and programmes produced for adults.'

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4. Social messaging

'Information and education on social issues is a signature initiative for the CCA. Every year we identify a different life challenge and produce an infomercial to educate about and highlight the issue, 24 have been made to date covering issues such as drugs, bullying, child abuse, healthy and active living. The learning potential is then extended in the classroom. The CCA makes use of advertising agencies expertise in producing these innovative broadcasts that speak to children in a relevant and powerful way.'

Help and support

Clearly CCA has been very successful, and asked what this can be put down to, Executive Director Diana Carradine responds 'History, success, and the commitment of a group of companies committed to educating and empowering children.' What, then, is the level of support from government in Canada? Diana explains 'We work with a number of departments; we're supported by World Health Canada, and the Department of Justice. We're also supported by government research, and experts in children's issues – for

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example bullying, healthy lifestyle – as well as a team of creatives.’ Diana goes on to say ‘All our work is supported by Canadian Teachers Federation, for teachers, and the Home and School Federation, for parents’.

Spreading the message globally

Diana Carradine says ‘There has been great interest expressed in what we do, and we’ve received enquiries from many countries; most have used our House Hippo commercial, created in 1999.’ House Hippo is an inventive ad, reminding children that not everything on television is real. Children are encouraged to think about what they see on TV and to ask questions.

‘Singapore has recently contacted us’, Diana continues, ‘and we’ve recently had an enquiry from Israel about our bullying campaign.’ Cathy Loblaw goes on to say ‘Paul Jackson came across the CCA at the World Federation of Advertisers and identified that its programmes would have huge benefits for countries in addition to Canada. Paul Jackson set up ‘Media Smart’ in the UK which focuses on the media literacy aspects of the CCA’s work (rather than the social issues). The CCA is very keen for its work to be replicated in other countries, for example the ‘House Hippo’ infomercial is now shown in the UK, although Media Smart has produced its own initiatives as well, and Media Smart is being expanded across Europe.’ (See interview with Paul Jackson page 9.)

Monitoring the effectiveness of the work of CCA

Any advertiser would aspire to the high level of awareness amongst the target audience of the CCA campaigns. It has commissioned independent research to measure the impact of CCA’s work. This shows extraordinarily high levels of effectiveness, with 95% of kids saying ‘CCA helps them a lot’ and on average respondents could recall three of the infomercials.

Research in 2003 revealed that 86% of kids had seen the CCA logo before, and 82% also said that they liked the logo. Children in the research also gave permission for CCA to talk to parents, too, 90% of kids responded positively when asked if it would be ok if CCA spoke to parents or adults, giving them tips on how to help children cope with problems.

Target age for campaigns

Deciding what age group to target depends on the issues that CCA are tackling. Diana says ‘We are mostly targeting six to 12 year olds, with a bull’s-eye target for particular issues. For example bullying, we tend to target by gender, and slightly younger than the key age we believe bullying begins to affect children. So for boys our programme ‘Walk Away’ targets boys aged nine to 10, whereas bullying actually becomes a big issue for boys at 11. And for girls ‘Words Hurt’ is targeted to 11 year old girls, as most bullying issues affect girls from around 12 or 13 years. So we are targeting them before the age it is likely to affect them. We are very proud of the work we have done with children on bullying, and have won awards for our creative work.’

CCA’s ‘Long Live Kids’ campaign

The latest campaign launched by CCA tackles childhood obesity, and Cathy Loblaw is rightly proud of the work that is being done. ‘Childhood obesity has been identified as a worldwide health issue and education of children on healthy eating and active living is particularly important as the greatest impact of this issue will be when today’s generation of children grow up. As this is such an important initiative we have created the sub-brand ‘Long Live Kids’ and plan for the programme to span three to five years rather than a few months. The ‘Health Rock’ infomercial has been shown in Canada since October 2004’.

Diana Carradine explains the campaign. ‘Over two years ago we started to track child obesity levels, and the consequence on long term health prospects of our children; this had been triggered by warnings from the World Health Organisation. Like many countries, we were deeply concerned about the life expectancy of our children. In Canada one out of three children are overweight or obese, and of these 80% are likely to remain so in adulthood. We realised that this was the number one issue impacting on children’s health. We had a part to play and we started by doing a full review of research available on the issue. We also got together a long list of partners including manufacturers, retailers, academics and nutritionists (see box). So we are unique in that we brought together a wide range of industry issue experts and government to essentially give kids tools to support a healthy lifestyle, to build consensus. The role of the CCA was to build common ground in the issue of childhood obesity.’

Deciding how to get the ‘Active Living’ message across to children

‘From our research we realised that we had many insights to instil in children who do not necessarily appreciate or absorb straight messages’ Diana says. ‘Balancing energy in and energy out, balancing what they eat with how they play. We describe it as ‘play’ rather than physical activity, because kids want to have fun, and that applies to physical activity as well as playing with friends.’

Diana continues ‘Our aim was to build a comprehensive on-going programme, based on highlighting to kids three messages, what kids eat, what they play and media literacy, ie making informed judgements about what media they absorb. We realise that children do not think about their health, or consider their lifestyle to be unhealthy, nor do they necessarily make a link between healthy eating and exercise; in fact most programmes tackle these two separately. We hope to put all three points, nutrition, activ-

ity, media literacy, under the same campaign. Basically children focus on taste and fun, we are giving them the tools to understand that there is a link between their health, what they eat, what they do, and how they interpret media messages, and we empower them to make informed choices.’

It seems the ideal time to launch such a campaign, and Diana agrees. ‘All companies now are looking at social responsibility, and of course this applies especially to companies that include children and young people as their customers. So we received big support from our partners and funding for research and the campaign itself. The ad agency JWT made a huge contribution in developing a campaign targeted to

Long Live Kids partners

Government

Health Canada

Education

Canadian Teachers’ Federation

Canadian Home and School Federation

Healthy eating and nutrition

Dietitians of Canada

Dr. Rena Mendelson, Ryerson University
School of Nutrition

Active living

Active Healthy Kids Canada

Canadian Association for Health,
Physical Education, Recreation and
Dance (CAHPERD)

Coalition for Active Living

Active Living Alliance for Canadians
with a Disability (ALA)

Parent, families and community

YMCA Canada

YWCA Canada

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada

Canadian Diabetes Association

Kids Help Phone

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children for positive change.’ Expanding on the media literacy aspect of the campaign, Diana explains, ‘We help them to understand that they should think critically about what they see, for example, the advertising of food and drink, and we help them to deconstruct what is real and what is not real, together with messages about good nutrition and activity, but always in a fun way.’

The launch of ‘Long Live Kids’

The campaign took Cathy, Diana and their colleagues around two years to gather together all the expertise and finalise the creative work. Diana says ‘We launched the first public service announcement in October 2004. It was the first ‘rallying cry’ for children to have healthier lifestyles in Canada, plus the platform to launch our programme. JWT suggested using animation and singing, and it was based to an extent on the vinaigrettes launched by the ABC Network in North America in the 1970’s and 1980’s, known as ‘Schoolhouse Rocks’, that looked at fun approaches to grammar, science, numbers and so on.’

The launch of the advertising was combined with an education programme across Canada to ensure that the message was being heard by all interested parties including schools, school organisations, educators, children’s clubs. ‘We are about to run research through our annual tracking study carried out with children and parents, to measure how effective the campaign has been to date. We know the advertising is most important as most people become aware of CCA through our advertising communication, in fact we’ve had on average 70% recall on previous campaigns. We believe it is most important to include parents as it is they who are likely to have an influence on activity and food consumed, but our philosophy is to empower children. We often liken it to the ‘blue box’ campaign run in Canada in the 1980’s for re-cycling. Much of this was through schools, and it was the children coming home and influencing parents to re-cycle.

Since launching the ‘Long Live Kids’ Campaign we have had a phenomenal request rate for information, so we are aware already that the campaign will be successful.’

Significantly, the CCA will follow up the campaign by creating a healthy child lifestyle ‘think tank’ that will include academics, researchers and nutritionists, the next public service announcement will be launched next year.

The future

With such a successful track record, has Concerned Children’s Advertisers, Canada, now tackled all the major issues affecting children? Cathy and Diana think not, and clearly these two enthusiastic campaigners, and their colleagues, are not about to rest on their laurels. ‘There is no shortage of issues that are of concern to Canadian children. Our focus is to identify which issues may be most effectively addressed by the resources we have. Later this year we will be launching the third part of an anti-bullying campaign, and we will be looking at teaching Canadian children to deal with stress at some point.’

The rest of the world waits in anticipation for the next campaign to emerge from this most effective of role models, a model that is having a profound effect on the way that children can be empowered globally to tackle the issues that affect them most, and encouraged to question closely the media messages they are receiving. As an industry, we must welcome, and embrace, the precedent that CCA has set.

Cathy Loblaw is President and COO of Concerned Children’s Advertisers

Diana Carradine is Executive Director of Concerned Children’s advertisers, and she is responsible for overseeing the social marketing portion of CCA. Diana comes from an advertising agency background, where she worked with clients, including Nintendo, Cadbury, and Kraft Post kids’ cereals. Her move to CCA reflected her desire to put her advertising experience toward providing messages of social importance to children.
www.cca-kids.ca