

Food on the Run 1999-2000:

**“Simple Solution to the Energy Problem”:
Evaluation of an adolescent nutrition and physical activity social marketing
campaign.**

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the 1999-2000 *Food on the Run* (FOR) project year the “Simple Solution to the Energy Problem” (“Simple Solution”) campaign was released. During that project year an evaluation was conducted to measure the awareness of and exposure to components of the campaign by high school students in California, particularly those students who attended *Food on the Run* high schools.

Food on the Run Program

Food on the Run is a multi-component high school-based intervention program to promote healthy eating and physical activity among adolescents. It is organized by California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition), a program of the California Department of Health Services and the Public Health Institute. Its mission is to increase healthy eating and physical activity among teens as a way to improve health and reduce risk of chronic disease. The goals of FOR are to conduct a high school-based program that:

- Prompts high school students to advocate for additional healthy food and physical activity options;
- Advances policy and environmental changes that promote healthy eating and physical activity options in the school and surrounding community; and
- Motivates students to eat healthier and engage in more physical activity using a social marketing approach.

FOR's primary target audience is multiethnic underserved high school students. Secondary target audiences include family members, school staff, community leaders and policymakers.

Food on the Run Social Marketing Plan

In November 1998 a social marketing plan was developed with Prospects Associates that recommends communication objectives and strategies for the FOR program. The plan was written with California Project LEAN's existing delivery mechanisms, goals, past successes, and program resources in mind, and incorporates ideas for state and community-level implementation and partnership activities.

This social marketing plan is the basis of the delivery of FOR's *Simple Solution to the Energy Problem* campaign. The *Simple Solution* campaign focuses particularly on the 3rd FOR goal mentioned above: "Motivates students to eat healthier and engage in more physical activity using a social marketing approach." This plan is a product of five key formative research components: a literature review, key informant interviews, focus groups, commercial market data (Teenage Research Unlimited) and a target audience profile based on the Diffusion of Innovations model.

Some of the formative research findings included the following. Adolescents were influenced to an extent by both advertisements and by what their peers ate and did with their free time. They were inundated with advertisements for foods high in fat, sugar and salt. The most popular foods among teens were pizza, french fries, cereal, hamburgers, cheeseburgers, and chicken nuggets – over 80 percent of teens reported liking these foods. On the other hand, teens also enjoyed healthy eating. Healthy eating

was considered “in” and trending upwards. Working out was also considered “in” but physical activity and sports did not rank high on the list of the most popular leisure time activities among teens. The formative research showed that FOR’s social marketing plan and main message must address these perceptions, opportunities, and competing behaviors and barriers. Finally, according to this research conducted with teens, “energy” was the concept that tied all of the elements together as a benefit and motivator for healthy eating and physical activity.

Such findings directed the development of the components of the “Simple Solution” campaign which include a poster with the equation logo and campaign slogan, public service announcements (PSA’s) made for television and radio, and a countertop display with tip sheets that target specific behaviors. (See Appendix A) The equation logo and campaign slogan primarily focuses on the benefit of healthy eating and physical activity that teens care about most: energy. The tip sheet in the counter display tells teens simple ways to eat healthy and be physically active in order to have more energy.

METHODS

CAMPAIGN DISSEMINATION

Program coordinators at each of the FOR high school sites were instructed to disseminate the campaign materials throughout the school year beginning in November 1999. TV and radio PSA’s played throughout the school year. The radio PSA’s were also played on public announcement systems on school campuses. Posters and countertop displays were placed on campus walls, in cafeterias, in classrooms, in school

offices and at school events. The majority of the dissemination of campaign materials was done by FOR high school students.

EVALUATION

At the beginning of the school year between the months of September and November 1999 a two-page pen and paper survey was distributed to a sample of students who attend FOR high schools throughout California where the Simple Solution campaign and accompanying materials would be released. The 13-item survey asked students about their awareness of various components of the “Simple Solution” campaign. (See Appendix B) The components included the equation logo, the slogan, and the targeted behaviors that were addressed in the tip sheets in the counter-top display as described above. The respondents were also asked to interpret the equation logo in two sentences or less. The responses were categorized and coded. At the end of the survey the respondents were asked to provide their name and contact information so that they can be tracked to complete a post-survey. The same students were surveyed pre and post. At the end of the school year between June and July, those respondents who provided contact information on the pre-test were mailed a post-survey along with a stamped envelope. A prize incentive was offered to those who returned a completed survey. All responses were coded and entered into databases. SPSS was used to organize and analyze the data. Frequency statistics were run on the appropriate survey variables and pre-post comparisons were conducted to measure a change in the awareness and exposure to the “Simple Solution” campaign. A separate evaluation component is currently being analyzed to measure behavior change.

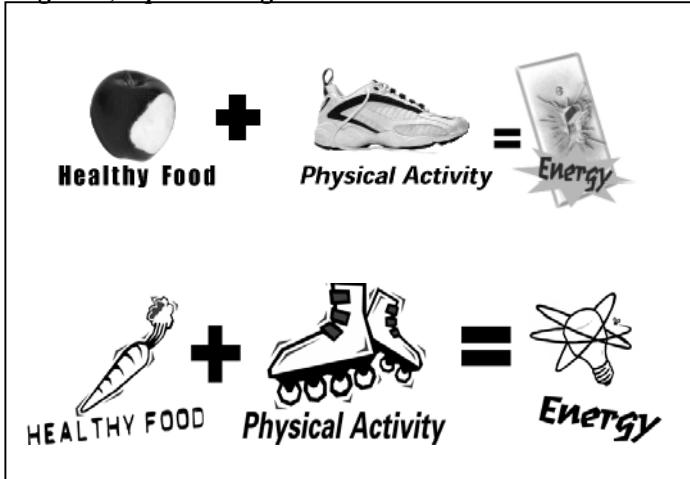
RESULTS

The following are the final results of the “Simple Solution” evaluation. There was a total of 66 respondents to the “Simple Solution” evaluation survey. The average age of the respondents was sixteen; 88 percent were female, 12 percent were male; 30 percent White/Caucasian, 8 percent Black/African-American, 36 percent Hispanic/Latino, 9 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 5 percent Native American and 12 percent Other.

RECOGNITION

Survey respondents were first asked if the equation logo (Figure 1) or any parts of it looked familiar to them.

Figure 1, Equation Logo



There was a significant increase ($p<.001$) in the number of students who recognized, or were familiar with the “Simple Solution” equation logo. By the end of the school year 94 percent of the students surveyed recognized the logo – a 42 percent increase. The top three locations that respondents said they saw the “Simple Solution” equation were

posters on campus (76%), TV PSA (28.8%) and countertop display (16.6%). (Note: percentages will not add up to 100% because respondents were instructed to mark all that apply.)

Survey respondents were also asked if they were familiar with the campaign slogan, “The simple solution to the energy problem.” (Figure 2)

Figure 2, Campaign Slogan



The Simple Solution
to the Energy Problem.

There was a significant increase ($p < .001$) in the number of students who were familiar with the slogan. By the end of the school year, 66 percent of the students surveyed were familiar with the slogan – a 100 percent increase. The top three locations that respondents recalled seeing or hearing the slogan were posters on campus (39.4%), TV PSA (19.7%) and countertop display (10.6%). (Note: percentages will not add up to 100% because respondents were instructed to mark all that apply.)

THE MESSAGE

On the survey, students were asked to interpret the “Simple Solution” equation logo (Figure 1) in no more than two sentences. Seventy-three percent of the respondents correctly interpreted the logo as it was intended, i.e., they stated that healthy eating and physical activity provides more energy. 13.6 percent stated that healthy food and physical activity make you healthy, 3.4 percent of respondents stated that the equation’s message is to eat healthy, and 10.2 percent stated a variety of other messages.

Table 1. Interpretation of campaign message by survey respondents.

Message Interpretation	
Energy	73.0%
Makes you healthy	13.6%
Eat healthy	3.4%
Other	10.0%

TARGETED BEHAVIORS

As explained earlier there was a countertop display developed with accompanying tip sheets that targeted specific desired behaviors to go with the “Simple Solution” message. On the survey, respondents were asked if they were likely to participate in the targeted behaviors within the coming year. 87.9 percent of the students responded that they plan to eat healthier snacks; 78.8 percent responded that that they plan to eat more low fat foods; 95.5 percent responded that they plan to eat more fruits and vegetables; 92.4 percent responded that they plan to move their bodies at least 30 minutes per day and 90.9 percent of the students responded that they plan to be more active.

There was a ten to eighteen percent positive change in intent to practice these healthier behaviors. Respondents seemed more likely to try to eat more fruits and vegetables and to move their bodies at least 30 minutes per day within the coming year.

Table 2, Intent to practice behaviors targeted in *Simple Solutions* campaign.

Targeted Behaviors	% likely to participate	% change pre-to-post
Eat healthier snacks.	87.9%	10%
Eat more low fat foods.	78.8%	18%
Eat more fruits and vegetables.	95.5%	10%
Move body at least 30 minutes per day.	92.4%	11%
Be more active.	90.9%	9.5%

DISCUSSION

The “Simple Solution” evaluation has demonstrated some success in the recognition and awareness of various components of the campaign in its first year. There were some limitations, however to this evaluation. First, the sample size was small, however, there was good statewide geographic and ethnic representation in the sampling. Secondly, this survey did not include an “unaided recall/awareness” component. In other words all survey items were directed only to specific components of the “Simple Solution” campaign rather than beginning by asking if the respondents recalled any health message without mentioning the specific campaign, then proceeding to probe into the specific campaign. Third, although the TV PSA was listed as one of the top three locations that respondents to the survey recalled seeing or hearing the logo and/or slogan, it has not yet been validated since the placement of the PSA’s have not yet been formally tracked.

Despite the main limitations, significance at the $p < .001$ was detected indicating true success in recognition and awareness. In addition, the evaluation demonstrated that the campaign message was easy for this target audience to understand. Although not at a highly significant level of change from pre to post-testing, intentions for practicing specific positive healthy behaviors were high at post-test.

The evaluation of the *Simple Solution* campaign will be completed with an analysis of how much influence this campaign had on any nutrition- and physical activity- related behavior change that occurred in the 1999-2000 project year. That data is currently being analyzed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations based on the 1999-2000 evaluation findings for the Simple Solutions campaign.

CAMPAIGN IMPLEMENTATION

- Promotion of the Simple Solutions campaign must continue on through future school years. Continuing the campaign will help to ensure repetitive exposure of the message to high school students, while addressing the constant change in the make-up of the student population of campuses.
- A variety of strategies should be implemented to promote the campaign to further increase exposure and familiarity with the equation logo and slogan. The poster should be strategically placed in many locations on the high school campus; student advocates should actively pursue placement of the radio and television PSA's on stations and on campus; students at FOR school sites should conduct events to accompany the targeted behaviors of the campaign to further elicit both behavioral intent and change.
- The Simple Solution campaign should begin to be introduced to other high schools, youth organizations, and adolescent oriented channels in California. Currently its promotion and implementation is primarily limited to *Food on the Run* high school sites.
- Communication, marketing and program intervention professionals at the State should formally compile a brief manual on specific uses of the *Simple Solution*

campaign materials including how to use and place the materials, campaign planning, and a comprehensive list of ideas.

EVALUATION

- A larger sample size should be used to conduct a more reliable evaluation of the *Simple Solution* campaign.
- An unaided awareness/recall component should be added to the survey.
- For future evaluation of the campaign, a post-only, intercept interview style methodology with an added unaided awareness/recall component should be conducted. This would be a stronger method yielding more accurate results on the effectiveness of this social marketing/communications campaign.

APPENDIX A

1. Simple Solution poster
2. Simple Solution illustrated logo
3. Countertop display
4. Tip sheets (front and back)
5. Public Service Announcement scripts (radio)

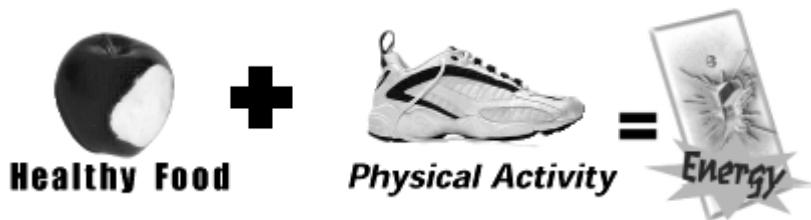
[Note: Please call or email CA Project LEAN staff to access these materials or check the CA Project LEAN Materials Order Form. Thank you.]

APPENDIX B

Evaluation Survey

Tell me something....

1. Do either of these, or parts of them, look familiar to you: YES or NO



1a. If YES, where have you seen it?

- Poster on campus
- Counter display
- TV ad (at school or at home)
- Newsletter
- Other places: _____

1b. In no more than 2 sentences explain what it means to you.

2. Does this slogan sound familiar to you: YES or NO

**The Simple Solution
to the Energy Problem.**

2a. If YES, where have you heard it?

- Poster on campus
- Counter display
- TV ad (at school or at home)
- Radio ad (at school or at home)
- Newsletter
- Other: _____

3. Within the coming year I am likely to: (circle your responses)

- | | | | |
|--|-----|----|-----------|
| a. Eat healthier snacks | Yes | No | Undecided |
| b. Eat more low fat foods | Yes | No | Undecided |
| c. Eat more fruits and vegetables | Yes | No | Undecided |
| d. Move my body at least 30 minutes a day. | Yes | No | Undecided |
| e. Be more active. | Yes | No | Undecided |

* * * * *

**about
you**

Age: _____

Grade: _____

Gender: Male Female

How do you describe yourself:

- White/Caucasian
- Black/African-American
- Latino/Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Native American-Indian
- Other: _____

PRIZES

Send this survey back to us in the stamped envelope postmarked by July 14,2000. AND as a “THANK YOU” for participating, as promised, we will send you your prize!! Look for it in the mail.