GRANTEE:
CHERRY MARKETING INSTITUTE

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Final Performance Report
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**RED RECOVERY: Cherry Conversations Powered by Digital Storytellers**

**PROJECT SUMMARY**

By leveraging and deploying our strong base of advocates (health/fitness/industry focused) as our Red Recovery Digital Storytellers, coupled with support from digital tools and unique partnerships, we were able to break through the relevant conversations to position cherries as the recovery Super Fruit. We engaged consumers and potential B2B customers in real-time with the end goal of increased usage and increased demand for the crop.

Social media is now considered a mainstream way to share and receive information about health, wellness and food, funding for this project helped support Michigan tart cherries’ expanded presence in the digital space, reaching media, consumers, influencers and industry decision makers in order to remain competitive.

This project built upon funds granted in 2009-2010 to help CMI launch a robust social media plan aimed at building a network of tart cherry advocates and engaging and educating them via specific online tools and offline sessions. The previous project:

- Strengthened cherries’ share of voice position versus specialty fruit crops from other states. (This was measured by Radian6, an online social media engagement and tracking resource).
- Strongly positioned cherries as a Super Fruit based on a growing body of science, directly in line with health and food trends.
- Had a positive influence on consumer behavior as evidenced by monitoring the content of conversation.

In summary, this grant allowed us to turn our advocates into active storytellers to tell our ingredient story to relevant audiences online, fueling awareness and usage, with the end goal to move more Michigan cherry crop.

**PROJECT APPROACH**

We deployed our Red Recovery advocates to serve as digital storytellers via the following targeted activations:

- **APPROACH: Participated in 4 Local Marathons with Powered by Red Advocates**
  - Leveraged both runners and sports dietitians in each market (Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and Boston) to promote the Red Recovery Routine and importance of choosing tart cherries as part of the training diet to maximize post-exercise recovery
    - **Sample tweets:**
      - Los Angeles Runner Hollie Self: “Putting tart cherries on my oatmeal this AM as part of #RedRecovery routine I’m using for the @lamarathon”
      - Los Angeles Sports Dietitian Alyse Levine, RD: “Hey LA, as you’re gearing up for the LA Marathon, try cherry juice to help manage post-race pain”
o Generated video testimonials of runner and RD advocates on how they train with tart cherries, and posted to choosecherries.com
http://choosecherries.com/health/poweredByRedAdvocates.aspx) and Choose Cherries YouTube channel, promoted through CMI social channels.
  ▪ Total of 1,364 views since launch of videos

• APPROACH: Engaged Food Blogger and Industry Advocates Online to Drive First-Ever ChooseCherries.com Recipe Contest
  o Generated 152 contest entries and 33,000 social media engagements in just two weeks
  o Worked with three food and fitness blogger advocates to host Cherry Red Cookware giveaways on their blogs, which generated more than 200 comments!
  o Leveraged advocate Dr. Wendy Bazilian and Matt Armendariz (MattBites.com) as judges who also posted to their social channels
  o Partnered with Research Chefs Association to distribute information in their Insider e-newsletter (reaches 2,000 chefs/R&D) and on their Website (received 100,000 views per month), and for added value, they also distributed a dedicated e-mail to their student membership of 400 to help drive up our student entries
  o Aggressively reached out to food, contest and industry/culinary media, as well as promoted via our social channels. Key outlets posted our contest information, including Chef and Plate Magazines
  o Distributed information to local cooking schools, and also reached them via Facebook
  o Generated NEW food industry followers on Twitter, including @FoodProcessing, @PreparedFoods, and @FoodProductDsn

• APPROACH: Elevated Cherries’ Unique Recovery Benefit During National Runners Month with Strategic Digital and Media Partnerships
  o Hosted Running Red #RedRecovery Twitter party with registered dietitian Rebecca Scritchfield
    ▪ Generated more than 700 social media engagements, and nearly 800,000 social media impressions. Some of the comments included:
      • @ Bobisyellow I've had arthritis for 10 years and never knew about cherries #MeFirst and #RedRecovery
      • @Soulfliesfree @ScritchfieldRD @ChooseCherries reduces post exercise muscle soreness #redrecovery
      • @MarkCristy3378 @ScritchfieldRD Food always makes me feel better....dried cherries sound delicious!!! #redrecovery
      • @Pittsbrgh24 RT@ScritchfieldRD: Q3: within 60 mins before the workout, go for simple carbs. The tart cherry juice is great because it carbs and water #redrecovery
o Official Red Recovery sponsor of Fitbloggin’ 2011 Conference (Baltimore, MD)
  ▪ **15+ blog posts** from onsite bloggers who loved the taste and health benefits of tart cherries
  ▪ Rebecca Scritchfield filmed a testimonial from the Cherries booth, [144 views to-date](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlyBvYhaets)

o Partnered with MapMyRun.com to distribute a dedicated eblast to their **65,000 runners** nationwide regarding cherries’ recovery benefits. Also distributed an eblast to more than **550 socially-active runners** we’ve connected with at marathons to-date

o Featured tart cherries in **10 TV segments** executed by local dietitians, including the Daily Buzz, which airs in more than **170 TV markets across the country – 5 in Michigan: Traverse City, Alpena, Flint, Lansing and Marquette**

o Engaged online runners by posting key recovery coverage from targeted pitching efforts, including Dr. Oz blog post, Self Magazine and AARP Magazine

• **APPROACH: Hosted Two Social Media Sessions for Cherry Industry Members in Michigan**
  o **Note:** This approach shifted as we got closer to the in-person sessions as it was tough for industry members to give up a full day of work. Instead, we turned this into a one-day Webinar, which offered a convenient alternative and allowed the industry to participate from the convenience of their home or office and not give up a full day to travel, etc.
  o **30 industry members** participated in the Webinar from a variety of companies including Cherry Central, Traverse Bay Farms, Pinnacle Foods, and Shoreline Fruit among others, almost DOUBLE the number we had at our first in-person session back in 2010
  o All participants were **highly engaged**, and mainly interested in Facebook and Twitter as a forum for their business.
    ▪ We got a sense that Facebook was still unchartered territory for most of the attendees, from how to use on a personal level to how it applies to their business.
    ▪ Most of the inquiries from Facebook and Twitter were related to actual functionalities and privacy concerns.
  o 1 participant – UpickCherries – launched their Twitter handle following the Webinar: [http://twitter.com/upickcherries](http://twitter.com/upickcherries)

**GOALS AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED (in 12-month period- October 2010-September 2011)**

• **GOAL:** Keep cherries in the top 3 share of voice ranking, as it relates to health-related superfruit conversations/dialogue

• **RESULT:**
  o Tart cherries ranked 5th for the year, but were neck-in-neck with grapes and cranberries. Overall, it’s a volatile environment that is constantly changing pending new product release, targeted partnerships, targeted digital efforts, etc.
However, because of our targeted recovery efforts, when looking at health-related conversations specific to tart cherries, **recovery chatter saw a 45% increase!**

- **GOAL:** Broaden our consumer appeal by influencing and engaging a wider audience, including trade media and food industry targets who converse in the digital space
- **RESULT:**
  - We were really able to leverage/incorporate trade media and food industry targets as part of our recipe contest effort, specifically partnering with Research Chefs Association, and getting key industry outlets to post our information on their channels
  - We also generated NEW food industry followers on Twitter, including @FoodProcessing, @PreparedFoods, and @FoodProductDsn
  - And, of course, we helped key industry members use Facebook and Twitter as a forum for their business, providing them with the tools and knowledge to launch their social channels

- **GOAL:** Influence consumer behavior as tracked by engagement metrics:
- **RESULT:**
  - 1,782 Retweets @choosecherries or via digital storyteller tweets
  - Total of 1364 views to Red Recovery testimonials at choosecherries.com
  - 87 Positive comments on ChoosesCherries Facebook page
  - 475 of “Likes” to posts on ChooseCherries Facebook page
  - Generated a 16% increase in Twitter followers, 51 percent increase in Facebook fans, and 54 percent increase in YouTube views
  - **More than 4,500 downloads of the Red Recovery Routine** at choosecherries.com (more than double the 2,000 downloads in 2010) and also doubled downloads of the Cherry Nutrition Report from 500 to 1,000

- Online conversations are influencing offline behavior (purchase)
  - Actual conversation stream on Twitter around the Chicago Marathon:
    - @Chanthana: Find me at the @choosecherries booth #587 @ Chicago marathon expo
    - @Bgervias: @Chanthana, where do you find your @choosecherries?
    - @Chanthana: Try Whole Foods and Trader Joes for dried cherries. Jewel has tart cherry juice

**BENEFICIARIES**
Michigan Tart Cherries

**LESSONS LEARNED**
Engaging digital storytellers is an efficient and effective way to maximize awareness and conversations around tart cherries’ unique recovery benefit and build a community that truly believes in tart cherries. Users in the digital world have been very responsive to the health
messaging of tart cherries when championed by trusted voices (influencers) and supported with credible research.

On a more specific note relating to the Social Media Webinar, given the participants were so receptive to Facebook and Twitter, we’d recommend that future trainings devote the same amount of time to just going through Facebook and Twitter, taking an even deeper dive. If possible, a live hands-on demo/set-up of their pages would benefit this audience so we can troubleshoot immediately on-screen with them. Additionally, we recommend a follow-up training on Engagement 101 – a walk-through of content writing and two-way engagement on both Facebook and Twitter after they’ve created their pages to increase the reach on these platforms.

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