



How Peel Helped the Can Manufacturers Institute Solidify their Messaging Strategy for a National Campaign



A Sound Approach

Starting with a **sound strategy** is critical to a successful marketing campaign. Without it, messaging may not get traction with consumers, resulting in expensive consumer communication program that doesn't deliver. When Peel Research Partners had to determine which strategy for an awareness campaign was going **to get the most mileage for their client**, they found conclusive answers that helped a struggling sector improve sales and generate positive changes in consumer attitudes.



A Tough Sell

Customer Misperceptions and Declining Sales

The Can Manufacturers Institute (CMI) was gearing up for a **national consumer communication campaign** to promote the use of canned goods. But right out of the gate, **the campaign faced some significant challenges.**

As Sherrie Rosenblatt, Vice President of Marketing and Communications for CMI said,

This new campaign was a big initiative for the can manufacturers. Our goal was to reverse a multi-year trend of declining canned food sales, which is no easy task. The industry was about to invest a lot of money in consumer communication initiatives, so we wanted to make sure our messaging strategy was sound and proven by reliable market research.

For one, canned foods were dealing with competitive pressure from foods in other packaging forms, and sales had steadily declined over the years. Prior research showed significant **customer misperceptions** were a big factor. For example, consumers tended to believe that canned food was loaded with preservatives, that canning made foods less nutritious, and that commercial canning was substantially different than home canning methods. Even though none of these were factually true, these beliefs **were having a significant impact on sales**, and created pressure on CMI to produce a campaign that would move the needle in the right direction.



Survey Know-How

Peel Research Partners was determined to identify the strategy that was going to win over the most customers and boost sales—and that meant answering a few key questions:

1. Which messaging strategy—“redefine” or “reinforce”—was going to have the greatest impact on consumer motivation?
2. Increase customers’ canned food consumption after reading the message?
3. Offer the most relevant, credible, memorable and unique message?
4. Evoke and support the emotions most associated with the benefits of canned food usage, as found from prior research?



Finding a Strategy that Works

Fortunately, past research offered two promising directions for the campaign—they could either go with a “redefine” or “reinforce” messaging strategy.



The “REDEFINE” strategy aimed at **educating people and correcting the misperceptions about canned foods.**

The other strategy “REINFORCED” the **benefits of canned foods and the positive emotions that these products elicited.**

Both strategies had promise, but it was important to use the one the was going to be the most effective at improving customer perceptions and offered the most opportunity for sales growth.

In addition, not only did the research need to identify the best over-arching strategy, but it needed to **prioritize shorter messages that best supported the winning strategy.** These shorter messages would be a critical element of the campaign, being used as sound bites on TV talk shows, in print and online advertisements, in-store signage, etc.

Sound Testing and Meaningful Findings

The goals for Peel’s research were twofold: **test the overarching strategy as well as 29 different shorter supporting messages.** With that in mind, Peel devised a test that would offer some clarity around the strategy and messaging questions. With a nationally representative U.S. sample, Peel Research tested more than 2,000 respondents (aged 21-74) in a demographically balanced evaluation to find out which approach offered the greatest potential for CMI’s campaign.

Using a **7-cell test design** that handled three versions of both the “redefine” and “reinforce” messaging strategy **plus a control cell**, respondents were exposed to one of the messaging concepts and asked a series of questions about their feelings about canned goods and future purchase interest. Their answers helped to **gauge motivation, uniqueness and believability for each strategy**, as well as the ability for each strategy to **improve and/or change consumer perceptions** toward cans.

REDEFINE
re-educate
consumers

Choosing a Campaign with Confidence and Clarity

While many of the strategic messaging concepts showed potential for improvement, Peel discovered that the “redefine” strategy **consistently outperformed the “reinforce” strategy** in changing customer perceptions and generating positive motivation.

The “redefine” strategy proved to be the most effective by **explicitly teaching consumers about the benefits and healthfulness of canned foods**. Messaging that emphasized how canning locks in freshness at peak ripeness, maintains nutritional value, and all without the need for preservatives, was extremely appealing to respondents. **These messages help to educate consumers with facts that directly address misperceptions** about canned goods and helps re-frame their thinking.

With a grounded rationale for their messaging strategy, CMI **now had confidence and a clear path** for creating a campaign that could move cans off the shelves and into the kitchen.

A Successful Campaign By Design

The research conducted by Peel Research Partners helped lay the foundation for a **strong messaging strategy**—the tested, grounded approach they discovered **helped CMI to create an effective** digital, print, in-store and television campaign.

In the first three years of the campaign, the “Cans Get You Cooking” campaign has **delivered some positive results** for CMI:

- A **slowing of the declining trend** of canned food sales
- An **increase in the percent** of consumers who say they are using cans more often
- A **significant increase in attitudes** toward cans and the canning process
- **Increasingly positive mentions** of canned foods in social media, *plus*
- **More mentions of canned foods** as recipe ingredients in national talk shows and other media

“Peel helped us choose the right messaging strategy and identify which messages would help educate consumers, make them think differently about canned goods, ultimately leading to changed consumer behavior.”

Sherrie Rosenblatt

While many people helped make this campaign a success, Peel was responsible for identifying a strategy that would deliver positive outcomes.