

The Challenge Of Marketing Nutrition

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It seems more and more emphasis continues to be placed on eating healthy, especially with the ongoing media coverage of the nation's obesity problem. Government agencies and task forces have stepped up efforts to shrink Americans' growing waistlines, highlighted by programs such as the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the new [MyPlate](#) [1] initiative.

With such a large, national health issue, the public seeks someone or something on which to place the blame, and more often than not, they can find a culprit in the companies responsible for feeding the country. Food manufacturers are often cast as the "demons" of the obesity crisis, fueled by the popular stereotype that the companies care more about being profitable than the consumers who buy their products.

But consumers' cries for more nutritional products have not fallen on deaf ears. Despite the bad press the industry receives, processors are making a genuine effort to make their products healthier. Since the release of the 2010 Dietary Guidelines, numerous food companies have taken the initiative to slash sodium, reduce sugar and cut fat in their products.

Even with these efforts, food companies are facing some hurdles when it comes to marketing these good-for-you foods. Take Kraft, for instance, which recently introduced a new version of its [Macaroni & Cheese](#) [2] featuring a half-serving of cauliflower in each cup. Food industry analysts and nutrition experts offered lukewarm reactions to the product, with some saying the effort was "better than nothing," and others calling the product "a silly idea."

Beverage giant [PepsiCo](#) [3] has also made recent efforts to offer healthier products, turning its focus from its soda line to products like Quaker oatmeal and Tropicana juice. Chairman and Chief Executive Indra Nooyi has set a goal of more than doubling PepsiCo's revenue of nutritious products to \$30 billion by 2020. However,

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investors have not viewed these efforts favorably, as the company's new focus has been blamed for Pepsi's slip to the [No. 3](#) [4] position behind Diet Coke and Coca-Cola. The combination of the point drop and a group of wary investors has forced the company to redirect more of its marketing dollars back toward its cola.

The skepticism of nutritionists and investors poses a large challenge for food companies looking to market more nutritious products. In an effort to make the most of a challenging situation, industry organizations are developing their own unique solutions. The Grocery Manufacturers Association has recently launched a [front-of-package labeling system](#) [5], which states major nutrition facts such as calories, saturated fat, sodium and sugars. The labeling system aims to alert shoppers to the nutrition content of each product, as well as any beneficial nutrients, such as fiber and vitamins, which meet the FDA's "good source" nutrient content claims.

Of course, the ultimate test of a healthy product is consumer response. While shoppers respond positively to the idea of nutritious foods, many will only purchase healthy items if the products taste good. This factor can pose a unique challenge to food processors, and many companies are expanding their research and development departments, testing products thoroughly to ensure optimum taste and mouthfeel.

While food manufacturers face an uphill battle when it comes to marketing nutritious products, it is clear that companies are making strides. A combined effort of highlighting the nutritional value of products and maximizing the taste of healthy products will help food manufacturers succeed with consumers, and in time may draw more support from nutritionists and investors alike.

What challenges is your company facing when it comes to maximizing nutrition and marketing healthy products? Let me know at lindsey.coblentz@advantagemedia.com [6].

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