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Crisis Communications Management

Spokesperson Briefing for Ubong Ituen, VP of Marketing for McDonald's USA

Objective: To support the announcement of the revamped Happy Meal

Reporter's Background

Name: Monica Eng

Affiliation: The *Chicago Tribune*

Role: Eng is a watchdog reporter who focuses on food and consumer issues. In this role, she examines how well the food industry and government agencies are serving the public, and how consumers can make the wisest choices. Eng also writes regularly on the topics of sustainability, cooking, health and food trends.

What the reporter wants to know: Eng wants to focus on McDonald's improved nutritional options regarding its new Happy Meal

McDonald's experience with reporter:

- Eng co-wrote an article discussing the debate over marketing Happy Meals and whether it is appropriate to use toys as a way to entice children into wanting McDonald's foods. The article has a somewhat negative tone and focuses on ending the practice of using toys to market unhealthy foods. The article appeared on stopcorporateabuse.com in July 2010.
- Eng co-wrote an article that chronicled Arizona mom and activist, Erin Carr-Jordan, who reported unsanitary, filthy conditions at several McDonald's indoor play areas. The article is negative in tone and calls attention for increased inspections and other regulations at fast food playgrounds. The article appeared in *The Chicago Tribune* in July 2011.
- Eng wrote an article regarding the impact of calorie postings on fast food items, including McDonald's locations. This article is neutral in tone and appeared in *The Chicago Tribune* in September 2012.
- Eng wrote an article about Arizona mom and activist, Erin Carr-Jordan, who became banned from several McDonald's locations after inspecting indoor playgrounds. Carr-Jordan was banned from eight Arizona McDonald's because her actions had "become disruptive to the employees and customers within our franchisee's restaurants." This article is neutral in tone and appeared in *The Seattle Times* in October 2011.
 - Although Eng's previous stories involving McDonald's are generally factual in nature, they do sway toward portraying the restaurant in an unfavorable light. This is why the interview with Eng is a top priority and why it is crucial to reinforce key messages to ensure McDonald's nutrition is perceived positively.

Key messages

- McDonald's addition of new Happy Meal options as part of the restaurant's effort to improve nutrition choices
- McDonald's commitment of offering consumers improved nutrition choices while continuing to meet the company's reputation for great taste and affordability

Interview logistics

Date: Monday, July 18

Time: 11 a.m.

Participants: Eng and Ituen

Location: Telephone (Eng will call Ituen)

Q&A

1. Q: Why did McDonald's USA decide to revamp its Happy Meal?
A: The revamped Happy Meal is part of our new comprehensive plan, "Commitments to Offer Improved Nutrition Choices," which aims to help customers—particularly families and children—make better nutrition choices, whether they are eating at McDonald's, at home, or elsewhere.
2. Q: What is different about the new Happy Meal?
A: Every McDonald's Happy Meal now includes produce or a low-fat dairy option. We will provide apple slices and a new smaller size French fries. These options will also include a choice of a Hamburger, Cheeseburger, or Chicken McNuggets.
3. Q: What led to the decision to automatically include apple slices in all Happy Meals?
A: McDonald's has offered apples as a requested Happy Meal option since 2004. While research revealed that 88 percent of McDonald's customers are aware of option, apples are only chosen 11 percent of the time. By automatically including fruit in all Happy Meals, McDonald's hopes to address the challenge of children not receiving the recommended amounts of produce.
4. Q: Do you have any future plans for expanding healthy Happy Meal options?
A: We are exploring alternatives to the apples, such as other fruits or vegetables, and low fat dairy items. For customers who prefer only apples as a side, two bags of apples will be available upon request.
5. Q: When will the new options roll out in all McDonald's locations?
A: The new Happy Meal will begin rolling out in September, with the goal of having them available in all 14,000 restaurants by or before March of next year.
6. Q: How will the new Happy Meal options have an impact?
A: The improved nutrition options will result in an estimated 20 percent reduction of calories of the most popular Happy Meals, and also reduced fat.
7. Q: Fast food is closely correlated with concerns about the rising rate of obesity among children. What other initiatives is the company doing to address this issue?
A: For several months, McDonald's has been working with leading food and nutrition experts, suppliers, government, and non-government organizations to determine ways it could play a role in addressing childhood obesity. Our company will continue to develop more fruit and vegetable options that will roll out in the next few years. We will also

continue to evaluate new research, statistics and consumer insights and behavior to determine future evolution of the Happy Meal.

8. Q: Yes, but the new Happy Meal still includes French Fries and other items that include high amounts of calories and fat. What is your response to people who may think your new Happy Meal isn't enough to combat obesity among children?
A: We agree with top food and nutrition experts that making incremental lifestyle modifications with food consumption will have a positive impact on overall health. We believe in moderation and support parents in their effort to encourage their children to enjoy healthy foods along with the foods they love.
9. A: What is your response to critics who feel it is wrong to use toys as a way to entice children into wanting McDonald's Happy Meals?
Q: We think the Happy Meal is a fun treat for children, and again, we believe in a well balanced diet that is achieved through moderation. We have evolved both our menu and marketing practices in recent years, and only advertise Happy Meals that include healthy side options.
10. Q: How else does McDonald's intend to raise nutrition awareness among children and families?
A: By the end of the year, we will raise health awareness through marketing national initiatives. McDonald's will promote health conscious food decisions and active lifestyle messages in 100 percent of its national kids' communications, including advertising, digital, merchandising and the Happy Meal Packaging. The company will also provide funding for community nutrition awareness programs.
11. Q: I understand one of McDonald's nutrition initiatives involves reducing sodium in its menu items. How does this initiative impact Happy Meals?
A: McDonald's has reduced sodium by 10 percent in the majority of its national chicken menu offerings, including Chicken McNuggets, a Happy Meal favorite.
12. Q: Discuss McDonald's involvement with the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative.
A: McDonald's has supported the Council of Better Business Bureaus and the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative since 2006. These programs involve a voluntary food pledge to only nationally advertise products to kids that represent healthier dietary options. McDonald's played an active role in helping to develop CBBB's new and more rigorous pledge standards, which include stricter sugar and sodium criteria and zero grams of artificial trans fat per labeled serving.
13. A: I understand McDonald's will also participate in a national listening tour to learn more about healthy menu alternatives. What will the listening tour entail?
Q: In August, McDonald's leadership team will participate in a national listening tour that will allow us to reaffirm our commitment of supporting parents and communities. This tour will involve hearing directly from parents and nutrition experts about what McDonald's can do to further promote healthy lifestyles.

14. A: How does McDonald's intend to measure and evaluate its new healthy initiatives, including the new Happy Meal?

Q: McDonald's will rely on neutral, third-parties who are experts in children's health and well-being. We are also in the process of establishing a Kids' Food and Nutrition Advisory Board that will include parents and leading children's nutrition, behavior and education experts to help develop effective marketing messages and programming for kids. Finally, McDonald's will also collaborate with a third-party organization to develop a measurement process that sets benchmarks and goals, and will be available to the public.

15. A: What does the next year look like for McDonald's?

- Q: I project the year ahead to be a great one. We will continue to honor our commitment of offering consumers improved nutrition choices while continuing to meet the company's reputation for great taste and affordability.