

RPIE Process: PR Plan: Healthy Foods Haven “Clean Eating Initiative”

R: Research

- After gathering as much information from the LA store manager as possible on the newly raised E. Coli potential issue, I would contact via phone the director or manager above me in my department, as well as send an email to the company President (and CC my boss), and tell them the exact news that I had received.
- After contacting my management team and higher ups, I would start my research by Skyping or calling the store manager in LA and, using the information I had initially gathered, start asking if other employees have received a phone call about this issue.
- After finding the employees that had also received a phone call about an ill customer in that timeframe, I would ask about exact details that they were told in that phone call, as well as the time of the phone call, and whether the ill person or persons had purchased a batch of strawberries or had a free sample in the store.
- In case this issue turns out to be a very large one, I would start a spreadsheet immediately, documenting time, information on the ill person, and whether they purchased strawberries, had a free sample in store, or both. If possible, I would gather information on where the ill persons lived, to make sure it indeed was our store and not a neighboring other store, and include that in the spreadsheet to be able to later map out a diameter of how far the boundaries of the stretched in the city.
- If any of the ill persons had to be hospitalized, or even go to the nearest Urgent Care, I would gather information on which hospitals or Urgent Cares were assisting these individuals. I know that because of HIPAA laws, there are some questions I could not ask, so I would keep it general to just how many individuals went in for potential food-bourn illnesses. I would ask them if they would make an alert or notify the media of our questions and create a panic, and if the answer is yes, I may wait on asking them.
- Investigate what other contaminants could be on strawberries besides E. coli that could make a person sick, and find out if it is common for pesticides from unwashed foods could cause a slight form of illness of any kind. I will assume the worst, because that is the best choice for our customers' health.
- Trace all the way back to where the fruit first originated from, and each distributor along the way, to find out where an illness could have originated, and how many other of my stores could have received the same shipment.
- Find out how many pallets of strawberry batches are left at the original store in LA, and then how many pallets are still at other Healthy Foods Havens, and use a budgeting spreadsheet to find out costs of tossing things out, and then give my management the advice to throw out all the strawberries if all my other research points to E. Coli. I would show them the cost numbers from my spreadsheet so they know what to expect, and discuss potential outcomes for throwing them out and not throwing them out.
- I would find out from my coworkers if our store has ever experienced an E. Coli outbreak, or any other food-bourn illness outbreaks, and if so, what was done successfully as well as unsuccessfully in those past cases.

- I would research online all past incidences of grocery stores having E. Coli outbreaks, and find out what grocery stores are more inclined to do (throw them out at the store or have distributor throw them out as well, etc), and the success rate of those choices of each grocery store. I would focus on stores that ended up having a bad outbreak, and try to learn from their mistakes and successes.
- I would ensure all my above research ideas and strategies do not potentially give anyone an opportunity to start spreading rumors or misinformation and create a panic about my store.
- I would meet with someone in the Legal department to ask their advice on the steps to take depending on the level of severity and which bacteria could be wreaking havoc.
- I would ask Human Resources about my process, and any potential holes I was leaving open.
- I would speak to our Social Media team and ask them to keep us informed about all posts and messages regarding this issue, and to start keeping a separate document noting all of the instances and their details. I would ask them to just have a generic “we are looking into it and will get back to you” answer if anyone is insisting to hear from us.
- I would have all my store managers arrange meetings with their employees. Prior to this, I would decide what will be covered in the meeting, and ask my team to approve my plan. Managers will ask their teams if they knew what all the steps were before giving out samples in the store, what they knew about food-bourn illnesses, and what they would do if there was a food-bourn illness situation at hand. The second half of the meeting would consist of telling them everything that has gone on with the store so far, and then train them what to say to the media if this issue turns out to be big, and remind them that their discretion is important at this time. I would conclude by mentioning the values and mission of the store, and that safety always comes first.
- I would end my research by deciding the best steps to take initially when responding to the media, and consider who the target audience would be that would hear our statement. I would how we want the public to feel and think about us, how to convey that we are caring of our customers’ health, and how serious we take all matters.

P: Planning/Programming

- **Goals:**
 - Inform the public about the great reputation that our stores have, especially if we have high health inspection scores, or if our reputation beats out the competitor’s reputation and scores.
 - Remind our customers of how long our stores have been in business and have always had a history of caring about customer’s health.
 - Let our customers know we are transparent and would be glad to speak with them about their concerns, day or night.
 - Show our positive imagery by showing our popularity among the community, and our growth over the years.
 - Inform any concerned distributors or local sellers that we do business with that we will always make the best choices in regards to our customer’s safety and happiness.
- **Publics being targeted:**
 - The general public within shopping distance to our stores
 - Any tourists that use our stores while visiting the town

- All the employees in the chain and at the headquarters
- All curious journalists and media outlets
- Local sellers who sell at our store
- Distributors who keep an eye on to whom they sell their products

- **Objectives:**

- While posting our usual media posts, we will post an extra post twice every week for the next 3 months about how we recognize the importance of food safety, our values and mission, or that food safety issues are not something we take lightly.
- As stages progress on the issue, whether good or bad, and at least once every two weeks for at least 3 months, short morning meetings at each store will be held to update everyone and do a pop quiz to make sure employees understand what to say to media and food safety rules.
- Have special deals for customers, such as “buy one get one ice cream” for the next 6 months, to let them know we appreciate their loyalty and that they still accept us as their grocer.
- Look at revenue and customer numbers since the incident and compare numbers from the month prior, as well as the year prior, to be able to analyze any trends of popularity increasing or decreasing.
- All the locations where we buy ad space will have additions every month for the next 6 months with a sentence or comment about how we care about our customers and have food safety always on our minds.
- To our customers who subscribe to email service with us, we will also be sending statements of our values and safety for the next 2 months, roughly once or twice a month.

- **Strategies:**

- Give the public what it wants to hear after a food safety scare by not hiding the fact but emphasizing that we will always address any possible concern as a serious one and show that fact over our social media outlets.
- Have the store managers hold a special meeting after one month to ask all the employees if they feel heard, and to have a comment box set up two weeks prior to the meeting for employees to voice their concerns.
- Offer twice as many hand sanitizer stations throughout the store to ensure our customers feel they are in a sanitary place.
- Have a special deal running of the fruit wash that they sell next to all the fruit in the stores to convey awareness.
- Make it a point to respond to all media press in a very timely manner (within 2 hours) on all platforms and email to show that we care about our relationships with them and that we are not hiding anything.
- Have each store manager give an approved statement if a media person asks about the incident.

- **Tactics/Tools:**

- Create and start a special campaign called “Clean Eating Initiative” that emphasizes the thorough inspection of all our food and the credentials of our distributors whom deliver our products, and have a video available to let people meet and see our distributors and a little bit of the process behind where their produce comes from.
- On top of sending press releases, offer any magazine, news, or online media folks the chance to have an interview with the regional/district manager of their area about the campaign and all the steps taken since the beginning to ensure customers are taken care of when something unfortunate strikes.
- Send a “thank you for being a customer” coupon for \$10 off their next \$100 purchase, and donate that money to a charity towards clean water in developing countries.
- Have a special offer to employees to anonymously make a suggestion to help the safety and cleanliness with a promise to have it looked over and taken care of (within reason) over the next 6 months.
- We will have an updated reprint of all the safety brochure or booklets that we give out to employees when they are hired.
- Achievements in timeline format (updated as changes happen):
 - Andrea will decide on statements for the press to be approved by her boss beginning this Wednesday, 3 days after the reports have started coming in on this issue.
 - The day after approval, the media will be pitched these statements by each store manager.
 - Our HR Director will approve all the placements of all the new sanitation stations, the new safety booklets, and the comment boxes for customers and employees.
 - Social Media department will approve campaign idea and start creating content and designs for our approval before launching.

3) I: Implementation

- Timeline for PR campaign:
 - March 20th - September 20th (six month campaign if it is a serious E. Coli outbreak, 3 month campaign if it is just bacteria)
- Budget:
 - Each store’s food and drink at each all-employee meeting = \$200
 - Regional Manager travel to LA for interview = \$1k
 - Create video for Clean Eating Initiative = \$500
 - Cost for giving coupons with great savings = \$2k
 - Extra ad space additions = \$1k
 - Reprint of safety brochures and employee manuals = \$800k
 - TOTAL = \$5,500
- Sample messaging:
 - Healthy Food Haven has made contact with the consumers who have purchased all potentially hazardous strawberries directly to inform them of this recall.
 - FDA will be working alongside Healthy Food Haven to establish that all the consumers will be notified, and to evaluate this recall for to ensure effectiveness.
 - Our stores are effectively trained to make sure our employees follow the highest health code policies and instructions.

- The individual who did not wash the strawberries will receive disciplinary action to ensure the problem does not happen again.
- (If it actually is E. Coli) We sincerely apologize to our customers who have had health problems due to the strawberries we received, and promise that we always have our customers health in mind, as well as having the cleanest store possible.
- We are having our distributor checked by the Health and Safety inspectors, as we only accept product from top distributors.

4) E: Evaluation

- **What went well in the PR campaign included:**
 - The local news (KREM, KXLY) and media outlets (LA Times, The LA Review, LA Daily News, LA Weekly) took an interest and covered our story, as well as all the initiatives we have taken to maintain our good image and reputation.
 - Saw a steady number of customers still coming to the store, which is a success since we were not expecting any more. We were just hoping for no less customers.
 - Saw our special coupons used constantly, and seeing it as a sign of customer loyalty.
 - Had comments put in the comment box, and a lot of the comments were positive as well as suggested improvements or complaints.
 - New hand sanitation machines were used, especially by the fruit sections.
 - Employees show satisfaction during the meetings, and appreciated the company for thinking and caring about them.
- **What could be improved next time:**
 - The Clean Initiative campaign videos were not viewed as much as we were hoping, possibly due to us not advertising it as interesting and applicable to most, as well as the video being too long.
 - The budget should have been higher, to accommodate for all employee food interests and dietary restrictions, causing some employees to have to leave to get their dinner elsewhere.
 - While the customer comment box was used, the employee comment box was not used much, despite employees showing their appreciation to have it.
 - Distributors felt there was too much emphasis and blame placed on them during the issue, and we should have shown more respect of their excellent reputation.