

**Title**

Swim For Life - A Multi Media Campaign Promoting Learn to Swim

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**Abstract.**

On average (2002-2006) 124 New Zealanders perish as a result of drowning every year, this equates to 3.1 deaths per 100,000 population (DrownBase™ 2007).

Swim For Life is a water safety marketing initiative. Its core objective is to ensure New Zealand children learn to swim and develop survival skills, essential for life in New Zealand.

Research (Water Safety New Zealand, the Ministry of Education [Government Agency] and AC Nielson) indicates an alarming divergence between New Zealand children's perception of their swimming ability and actual swimming ability. Less than 25% of all New Zealand children can swim 200m by the age of 12 (AC Nielson, 2002).

In April 2007 Water Safety New Zealand launched the first phase of a major public awareness campaign with television and movie theatre advertisements.

The market research undertaken post campaign indicates 41% of those surveyed recalled the ad. Of those that recalled the ad, 16% have enrolled their children in swimming lessons as a result.

An additional outcome of the multi media campaign is that Swim For Life is now partnering with Weet-Bix (corporate) to promote the understanding and importance of learning to swim in New Zealand. The role of further corporate and strategic partnerships is also being explored.

**Introduction**

Swim For Life is a social marketing initiative. It is not a programme or method of learning to swim.

“Social marketing is the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution, and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behaviour of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of society” (Andreasen, 1995).

The objective of Swim For Life is to raise awareness of learning to swim and survive, by ensuring that all schools and private swim schools/operators offer a quality learn to swim and survive opportunity to their students.

This objective recognises that the ability to swim and survive impacts upon all aquatic activity and is therefore fundamental in increasing water confidence levels in, on and under the water, and the prevention of drowning.

In 2007 Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) commissioned the production of a television commercial (60 second and 30 second). The television commercial (TVC) formed part of a Mass Media Campaign which

also incorporated movie theatre advertising. The length of the campaign was 8 weeks with the TVC airing on one television network.

As a result of the attention and success gained by the Mass Media campaign WSNZ have entered into a partnership with Weet-Bix. Weet-Bix is New Zealand's number 1 breakfast cereal (Sanitarium website, 2007). Weet-Bix manage the Weet-Bix Tryathlon and are major sponsors of the All Blacks.

Weet-Bix believe every New Zealand child should learn to swim and in partnership with WSNZ are working to support the Swim For Life marketing initiative by way of communications and promotional support.

## **Background**

The foundation skill for enjoying New Zealand's vast and varied aquatic environments and activities safely is the ability to swim and survive. All New Zealanders should know how to swim and survive regardless of their choice of aquatic recreation. Even those who don't undertake aquatic based activities need to be able to swim and have basic water safety skills. Over the last 15 years, more people have drowned from non-recreational incidents, such as accidentally falling into water, than while participating in recreation activities (DrownBase<sup>TM</sup> 2007).

Swim For Life is the largest initiative in 50 years promoting learn to swim and survive. It is not an event or a programme, but pulls together potential providers and deliverers of learn to swim and survive to provide quality learn to swim and survive outcomes to young New Zealanders.

All young New Zealanders should experience learn to swim and survive as a normal course of growing up. Many barriers to having a nation of swimmers have become apparent. These barriers include factors such as schools no longer having or being able to afford to operate their own pools, families being unable to afford swimming lessons, and the changing cultural composition of New Zealand communities. These and other factors have contributed to learning to swim slipping off the priority radar.

WSNZ realises that the current situation cannot be allowed to continue. Swim and survive is a core-life skill and our children deserve the opportunity to learn how.

Also of concern in New Zealand is the failure of the education system to provide quality learn to swim outcomes and a greater reliance on private enterprise to support the development of fundamental learn to swim skills in school children. The barriers to learning to swim and survival in New Zealand are evident across all geographic and demographic categories. Swim For Life is focussing on creating awareness and mobilising parents, communities, individuals and schools to not only understand the importance of learning to swim in a relevant context but to act upon the need.

Since 2002, Water Safety New Zealand has undertaken extensive research, surveying and evaluation to develop a marketing campaign New Zealanders will be receptive to, along with achieving a long term reduction in drowning deaths.

The aims of the Swim For Life marketing campaign are represented over two levels:

1. Increase awareness of the importance of learning to swim
2. Mobilise parents and caregivers to take action

To achieve the above aims an understanding of social marketing and the process of behaviour change must be reached to develop the campaign proper.

Clemenger BBDO identified the 5 Principles of Behaviour Change:

1. Making a change takes time
2. Change depends on four conditions
  - a. Benefit of change
  - b. Cost of change
  - c. Self efficacy
  - d. Influence of others
3. Change only happens when benefits are perceived to outweigh the costs
4. You need “education” to assist change – it’s the carrot  
You need “enforcement” – it’s the stick
5. Education and enforcement work best together, rather than in isolation

Internationally and more recently in New Zealand, there is a growing body of evidence that social marketing – the application of marketing principles to achieve behaviour change for a social good – is experiencing great success (Porter Novelli New Zealand, 2002).

Examples of successful and long running social marketing initiatives in New Zealand include; drink driving, road safety, smoke free, fire safety, physical activity, alcohol consumption.

Clemenger BBDO also detail the 5 Principles of Behaviour Change Communications:

1. Identify the audience and the objective
2. Knowledge is the key – the power of research
3. Telling ain’t selling – the education fallacy
4. There is no single “magic bullet”
5. Budget for sufficient activity over sufficient time

## **Results**

The post campaign market research indicates that the awareness of drowning as a social issue in New Zealand increased from 1% pre-campaign to 2% post campaign.

There was 41% recall of the TVC.

- 62% of those that recalled the TVC feel more strongly about the importance of learning to swim.
  - 16% of those who recalled the TVC have enrolled their children in learn to swim lessons.
  - 7% of those who recalled the TVC have made enquiries at their local swim school.
  - 6% of those who recalled the TVC have contacted their child’s school to investigate the schools learn to swim programme.

## **Discussion**

WSNZ identified the audience as being parents, caregivers, school teachers and school principals. The objective is to raise the awareness of the importance of learning to swim and to mobilize parents to take action.

Significant qualitative and quantitative research supports the TVC and mass media campaign along with the fundamental concept of Swim For Life.

A cognitive approach was undertaken as the method to achieve success. A TVC was produced that leveraged emotion, sense of loss and helplessness. A mix of rational and emotional messages form the basis of the TVC.

Complimenting the mass media campaign is supporting communications. This includes the production and distribution of Swim For Life booklets to parents, schools and children throughout New Zealand in partnership with Weet-Bix. Over 200 swim schools and aquatic facilities are Swim For Life branded, displaying 3m x 2m banners and placing footpath bollards in the entrance way. A significant amount of print advertising in education industry publications along with placement in parent magazines was also undertaken.

The budget expended on Swim For Life in 2006/07 was over \$600,000 NZD. This will rise in 2007/08 and further support is assured for future years so long as achievement standards are met and evidence of successful outcomes documented.

### **Conclusion**

The Swim For Life mass media campaign achieved an impressive level of success (41% recall and 16% enrolled children in lessons). The value of supporting communications collateral cannot be underestimated.

The mass media campaign raised the profile of learning to swim in New Zealand significantly enough, such that a major corporate (Sanitarium) and the popular brand Weet-Bix are now partners in the Swim For Life Initiative.

Weet-Bix have committed to placing billboard sized banners within public pools in New Zealand further promoting the value and importance of learning to swim. Future intentions include communications support from Weet-Bix for bus shelter and bus back advertising with potential to become a major sponsor in the future.

The impact on the community cannot be lost or undervalued in the midst of the mass media campaign. The community are the real benefactors of the Swim For Life initiative. An increase in swimming ability will over time show a reduction in drowning incidents in New Zealand. The ability to swim also opens up a myriad of recreational activity for which can be enjoyed more safely.

### **Key Messages**

1. Learning to swim no longer exists as a core activity in New Zealand's primary schools due to a number of factors including increasing competition from other social issues e.g. fire, drugs, road vehicle etc. There is a growing shift to utilise council or private providers.
2. A social marketing campaign to increase awareness of the importance of learning to swim and the mobilisation of parents and caregivers to act does work.
3. The benefits of partnering with a major corporate provide ongoing and additional opportunities to further the reach of the social marketing campaign.
4. The ongoing investment to achieve behavioural change in society needs to be large and sustainable

5. The support of industry partners (swim schools and aquatic facilities) is paramount to ensuring the infrastructure exists to support social change
6. Advocacy is an undervalued tool which should be used in partnership with a comprehensive communications plan to support societal change.

### **Acknowledgments**

While **Swim For Life**<sup>®</sup> is a Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) initiative it will bring together many partners or stakeholders. These include the Regional Sports Trust network, the Ministry of Education, New Zealand Swim Coaches and Teachers Association, the New Zealand Recreation Association and Local Authorities all of whom are integral to achieving the objective and vision of the **Swim For Life**<sup>®</sup> initiative.

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