

## ShowCase

### VERB™

**Topic:** Physical activity

**Organisation:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

**Location:** USA

**Dates:** 2002 to 2006

**Budget:** US\$339 million (over 5 years)

**Website:** [www.cdc.gov/youthcampaign](http://www.cdc.gov/youthcampaign)

**Contact:** CDC-INFO Contact Center

**Email:** [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov)



### Overview

This 'for-kids-by-kids' multicultural campaign aimed to increase and maintain physical activity among 'tweens' (children aged 9 to 13). Launched in 2002 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the US, VERB™ used commercial methods of youth marketing to promote being physically active as cool, fun and a chance to have a good time with friends.

In addition to its strong brand identity and communications presence, the five-year campaign offered opportunities and support for active and rewarding participation, including: community-based activity events; activity start-up kits; innovative teaching materials; 'street teams' to engage tweens at events; small grants to support physical activity in schools; and contests, competitions and sweepstakes.

### Results:

- After 1 year, effects were found in free-play physical activity in sub-populations, notably younger tweens (9 to 10 years) and girls
- In years two and three, effects were found for the entire target population for free-time physical activity
- Findings from year four (2006) showed that the level of exposure to VERB™ by tweens was significantly associated with physical activity the day before the survey and on each of the psychosocial variables

## 1. BEHAVIOUR

- To increase and maintain physical activity among tweens (youth aged 9 to 13)

## 2. CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

- Literature review to understand the target audience and other campaigns reaching them
- Primary research (focus groups, interviews and ethnographic inquiries) with tweens, parents and influencers
- Review of commercial marketers selling products to the target audience
- Pretesting of concepts, advertisements and materials

## 3. THEORY

- **Theory of Planned Behaviour:** Behaviour determined by intention to perform and attitudes towards a behaviour; influenced by social norms and perceived behavioural control
- **Social Cognitive Theory:** Emphasises the interplay of intrapersonal factors, environment and behaviour
- **Hierarchical steps of information processing:** Impact of persuasive communication is mediated by attention, comprehension and acceptance
- **Branding theory:** The target audience will develop brand loyalty when they associate with brand attributes and this affinity to brand attributes is built over time

## 4. INSIGHT

- Pressure to perform, excel and achieve
- Change creates tension
- Self-esteem and self-confidence are vital
- Tweens think short-term
- Setting and achieving goals helps tweens maintain a healthy lifestyle
- Tweens are increasingly independent and self-defining
- Tweens are looking to improve themselves
- Tweens associate the word 'activity' with organised sports
- Staying active helps tweens make good choices
- Family and friends are important influencers
- Positive role models encourage tweens to be their best

## 5. EXCHANGE

- **Barriers:** Fear of failure; Lack of time; Family responsibilities; Competing interests
- **Benefits:** Opportunities to explore their goals, develop their skills and be with friends
- VERB showed tweens that physical activity took many forms and was not only about organised sports or athletic competition
- VERB was positioned as tweens' own brand – not imposed by adults

## 6. COMPETITION

- Complex, crowded media environment – VERB harnessed commercial marketing techniques
- Other activities, lifestyle choices and ideas

## 7. SEGMENTATION

- **Primary audience:** Tweens (youth aged 9 to 13)
- **Secondary audience:** Parents and adult influencers, including teachers, youth leaders, physical education and health professionals

## 8. METHODS MIX

- Four-phase advertising campaign
- Added-value opportunities via media partners
- Contests (e.g. pedometer-based school competition)
- Public relations
- Website, including blog and 'VERB Recorder' where tweens recorded physical activity to win prizes
- Customised materials for schools
- Turnkey kits
- Activity promotions within communities, including grants
- Community-based event sponsorship
- Guerrilla, street team and mobile marketing
- Verb Yellowball