PMA-ANZ Fresh Connections conference
Wiggles to help Aussie and Kiwi kids ‘Pick Right. Feel Bright!’

PMA-ANZ is out to prove that advertising still works. Today it announced that it has enlisted the help of children’s entertainment gurus The Wiggles to prove as much. “They’re very passionate about what we’re doing,” said PMA-ANZ CEO Michael Worthington. The Wiggles will be the face of a campaign to engage children with healthy eating habits, and counter the 5000 plus junk food advertisements seen by the average child of the developed world each year.

The Mark Blue scholarship was also announced as part of the launch. Mark Blue, who sadly passed away, was a mentor for students and a well-known member of PMA. Sponsors have already contributed a total of $50,000 to the scholarship.

The announcements came at the end of day one of the Fresh Connections conference, and followed a presentation from produce marketing king Jeff Dunn, President of Packaged Fresh. Mr Dunn is one of the founders of the successful ‘FNV’ and ‘Eat Brighter’ campaigns from the US, which used Sesame Street to help launch the message to children to eat more colourful fruits and vegetables. The Australian version of the campaign, called ‘Pick Right. Feel Bright!’ will be rolled out among growers and retailers across Australia.
Conference talk began with marketing to the future fresh produce customer, with Morning Show Futurist and the world’s first “Chief Digital Officer” Chris Riddell first on the lineup. Mr Riddell spoke about the impact of the consumerization of technology on buying and selling food. “Digital culture is a thread that must run through every business here, whether Business to Business or Business to Consumer,” he told the audience. Three of the speakers who followed, including Professor David Hughes of Imperial College London, repeated the same mantra in relevant contexts. Mr Riddell also identified the fast flow of information and accelerated networks as key issues facing the industry, but he then pointed to where the answers lie: leveraging the mobility of the customer, and finding ways to solve mechanical problems with information based solutions – similar to the way Google operates.

Advertising Still Works – the history
Advertising still works, but it needs a solid, collaborative effort and a new approach was the day’s take away message. Offering a prime example of how the industry in the USA has taken up the challenge outlined by Mr Riddell, Mr Dunn, went through the case study of the new ‘FNV’ initiative underway there. 50 celebrities have been brought on board in a stylish new marketing campaign using traditional advertising tricks to encourage children to see fresh produce the same way they currently see junk food – as relevant and appealing. “People do what you inspire them to do,” he said. “In the context of junkfood marketing kids love colour, excitement, and the product just happened to be in the centre of that.” The initiative has helped double the numbers of ‘healthy’ food photos on Instagram, and increased the number of Americans making an effort to eat more healthy to 80%, up from 46% three years ago. “If you’re not speaking to your customers, someone else is. There is no stasis in marketing,” he warned.
Both Mr Riddell and the third speaker of the morning, Dan'l Mackey Almy, CEO of DMA Solutions, identified a need for growers and producers to be engaged with the fastest growing social media platform in the world – twitter. “Give me 15 minutes and I can give you 5 reasons why you need to be on twitter,” she said, at the same time as she emphasized the importance of telling an authentic, engaging story to potential customers through advertising. She encouraged the audience to work on harmonizing sales and marketing efforts so that they were more aligned with similar goals, and working toward the same results.

The conversation returned to more traditional forms of innovation with presenter Justin Frank, of CHEP. His case studies combined the use of technology with the philosophy outlined by the previous speakers. Logistics, transportation and storage successes with bananas, apples and avocados included adapting crates to better cater for soft bananas, and reuse crates to ship avocados from New Zealand to the US within a tight timeframe.

The conference is being held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre until Thursday afternoon. The conference, which saw some 500-700 enter on the first day, is expected to attract at least 1200 visitors over three days.

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