

"It's a Fat Free Food! Moo!"

by Joe Mulder

A few years ago, bottles of Hershey's chocolate syrup featured a graphic on the back, near the nutritional information. Depicted on the bottles of chocolate syrup was a cartoon drawing of a cow. At least, one presumed it was a cow; it was, in fact, rail-thin and standing on its hind legs. A comic book-style speech bubble emanating from the creature contained the text: "It's a fat free food! Moo!"

What follows is a transcription of the meeting at Hershey headquarters in Hershey, Pennsylvania during which the rail-thin cow ended up standing on her hind legs and saying "It's a fat-free food! Moo!"

[note: normally, I would put up some sort of disclaimer, such as "the following is satire, and is not intended to reflect the actions or beliefs of any person, living or dead," or "this is a fictional humor piece that in no way is meant to reflect upon The Hershey Company," but I think we can all agree that the following must have actually happened, for real, because that's the only way you could possibly have ended up with a rail-thin cartoon cow, standing on her hind legs, saying "It's a fat free food! Moo!"]

November 27, 2002
Hershey, Pennsylvania
The Hershey Company
Conference Room B

7:06 p.m.

MARKETING DIRECTOR: Gentlemen, I know you're all anxious to get started on that nice, long Thanksgiving weekend, and Lord knows I am too. Now, we're almost finished tweaking the redesign of the chocolate syrup bottle, but we need a catchy, can't-miss-it way to let people know that Hershey's chocolate syrup is 100% fat free. Ideas?

EXECUTIVE #1: How about some sort of recording that plays when you squeeze the bottle?

EXECUTIVE #2: How about we station a guy in each supermarket in the country, and have him tell people as they walk by?

EXECUTIVE #3: How about we drop flyers from a plane?

MARKETING DIRECTOR: See, you guys are brainstorming, and I like that, but I think, just in this instance, and I know this goes against everything that Jeremy guy said last week at the Leadership Retreat, but, for this particular task at hand, we might need to think a little smaller.

EXECUTIVE #4: Why don't we just put the words "Fat Free" on the bottle somewhere?

MARKETING DIRECTOR: Oh, yeah; that hasn't been done before. Geez. "Uh, duh, I have an idea! Why don't we make a TV show about a radio psychologist in Seattle who lives with his dad and has a real femmy little brother?" "Hey, great idea, Jim, I've never heard of anything like that before!" Who else?

EXECUTIVE #5: How about a cartoon?

MARKETING DIRECTOR: What's that?

EXECUTIVE #5: How about a cartoon? Not a real one, like on TV, that can talk and stuff; but just like a single still cartoon?

EXECUTIVE #2: You mean like "Calvin & Hobbes?"

EXECUTIVE #5: Exactly!

EXECUTIVE #3: I love "Calvin & Hobbes!"

MARKETING DIRECTOR: I see where you're going with this, Hodges. A cartoon. Good. I like it. Now, what sort of cartoon?

EXECUTIVE #3: How about a six-year-old blonde kid and a stuffed tiger?

MARKETING DIRECTOR: We can't use "Calvin & Hobbes!" Okay?

EXECUTIVE #5: We could put a cartoon of a fat molecule, with one of those red "Ghostbusters" slashes through it.

MARKETING DIRECTOR: I'm not really sure most people would recognize a fat molecule just by looking at it, Pete. I don't think that gets our point across.

EXECUTIVE #4: How about instead of a cartoon of a fat molecule, we have the "Ghostbusters" slash going through a picture of Fats Domino?

EXECUTIVE #3: Or of Minnesota Fats!

EXECUTIVE #1: Or of former Denver Nuggets point guard Lafayette "Fat" Lever!

MARKETING DIRECTOR: Guys...

EXECUTIVE #2: Or how about of Jonathan Winters? He's kind of fat.

MARKETING DIRECTOR: Guys! I think we're on the wrong track here. Let's think about the product, huh? Let's think about Hershey's chocolate syrup. What to people

POOP READING

usually use it with?

EXECUTIVE #2: Um... milk?

MARKETING DIRECTOR: That's right: milk. And what animal do people usually associate with milk?

EXECUTIVE #1: Cows!

MARKETING DIRECTOR: No, they associate – wait, what did you say?

EXECUTIVE #1: Uh, cows, sir?

MARKETING DIRECTOR: Hm. Cows. That might even be better than what I was thinking of. Cows. Yeah.

EXECUTIVE #3: We could have a cartoon cow!

EXECUTIVE #5: With a "Ghostbusters" slash through it?

EXECUTIVE #4: No, guys, dig this: what if the cartoon cow *told* people that Hershey's chocolate syrup was fat free?

EXECUTIVE #1: You mean with some sort of a recording that plays when you squeeze the bottle?

EXECUTIVE #3: Or by dropping flyers from a plane?

MARKETING DIRECTOR: I'll drop you from a plane in a minute, you–

EXECUTIVE #4: No. No, what if the cartoon cow had one of those cartoon talking bubbles coming out of it, and it said, "It's fat free!"

MARKETING DIRECTOR: You know what? I love it! That's perfect. We'll get design on it first thing Monday. Good work, Johnson. Have a great Thanksgiving weekend, every –

EXECUTIVE #2: Hold on!

Everyone has started to get up to leave; they sit back down.

MARKETING DIRECTOR: Yes, what is it?

EXECUTIVE #2: How would people know what she's talking about?

EXECUTIVE #4: What do you mean?

EXECUTIVE #2: Well, the cow's saying "It's fat free!," right? What's fat free? How would people know what she's talking about?

EXECUTIVE #3: I think we can assume people will know she's talking about the chocolate syrup.

MARKETING DIRECTOR: Yeah, and do you think we can *assume* that chocolate syrup sales won't drop by over 50% the first week due to confusion regarding what might or might not be fat free? Does anybody here feel comfortable *assuming* that won't happen? I sure as hell don't! Good catch, Fitzwater.

EXECUTIVE #2: Thank you, sir.

EXECUTIVE #4: How about if the cow says, "This chocolate syrup is fat free!"

EXECUTIVE #1: No, because then people might think that only the bottle they were looking at was fat free. Like the cow was saying that only *this* chocolate syrup was fat free.

EXECUTIVE #4: I see your point. How about, "It's fat free chocolate syrup!"

EXECUTIVE #3: That's just redundant! People know it's chocolate syrup; you don't have to beat them over the head with it. They'll start to resent that, believe you me.

MARKETING DIRECTOR: Fine, fine. Applebaum's right, we don't need to reaffirm that it's chocolate syrup. So what does the cow say, then?

EXECUTIVE #2: How about "It's a fat free viscous beverage additive and dessert topping!"?

EXECUTIVE #1: How about "It's a fat free food!"?

EXECUTIVE #5: But it's not "food."

EXECUTIVE #1: You eat it, don't you?

EXECUTIVE #5: Well, kind of, but not really...

MARKETING DIRECTOR: You know what? I think "food" will be fine. "It's a fat free food!" Works for me. All right, there we have it. Nice work, men. We'll see you on Monday. Have a great –

EXECUTIVE #2: Hold on.

Everybody groans.

MARKETING DIRECTOR: What is it now, Fitzwater?

EXECUTIVE #2: Isn't anybody worried about the fact that Hershey's chocolate syrup is fat free, and yet we're proposing to have a cartoon cow on the bottle?

EXECUTIVE #3: Yeah? So?

EXECUTIVE #2: Well, cows are fat, aren't they? That's sort of what they're known for, in fact. Well, that and milk.

POOP READING

MARKETING DIRECTOR: So you're saying we don't want something fat on the bottle of our fat free food, is that what you're saying?

EXECUTIVE #2: That's exactly what I'm saying.

EXECUTIVE #4: You know, I think he might be right.

EXECUTIVE #1: What if we made the cow skinny?

He scribbles a quick sketch on a piece of paper and holds it up for all to see.

EXECUTIVE #1: Like this.

MARKETING DIRECTOR: That looks weird.

EXECUTIVE #5: I think she has to be standing up!

MARKETING DIRECTOR: Pete's right; do one where she's standing up.

He scribbles another sketch and shows it to the group.

EXECUTIVE #1: How about that?

MARKETING DIRECTOR: That one doesn't look nearly as weird, for some reason.

EXECUTIVE #2: Oh, yeah, she's definitely got to be standing up. Clearly.

EXECUTIVE #3: But now you can't even tell it's supposed to be a cow.

EXECUTIVE #2: Of course it's a cow! It's got a big cow nose, and cow spots, and that udder sort of thing –

EXECUTIVE #3: But it's standing up, and it's skinny! Neither of those things correspond to what cows are actually like!

MARKETING DIRECTOR: Well, I'm sorry, Applebaum, but the cow has to be skinny because the chocolate syrup is fat free, and the cow has to be standing up because if she's not it looks weird. So I don't know what you'd have us do.

EXECUTIVE #3: Why can't she say "moo"?

MARKETING DIRECTOR: "Moo?"

EXECUTIVE #3: Yeah, if the cow is saying "moo," then people will know it's a cow.

EXECUTIVE #2: It has a cow's head; what else is it going to be?

EXECUTIVE #3: I just don't want people to be confused.

The cow should say "moo."

EXECUTIVE #2: What a minute... huh? Who said that? You there, was that you? You see, I can't tell if you're a person or not, because you didn't punctuate your remarks with some sort of species-specific noise at the end, like you seem to think cows invariably do!

EXECUTIVE #3: You know, you have *always* been a dick to me, for no reason!

MARKETING DIRECTOR: Cut it out, you two! Now, guys, it's 7:45, we all want to get out of here. Exactly what have we got, at this point?

EXECUTIVE #4: A skinny cartoon cow, standing upright and saying "It's a fat free food! Moo!"

MARKETING DIRECTOR: All right. And, is everybody good with that?

EXECUTIVE #3: Um...

EXECUTIVE #4: Whatever.

EXECUTIVE #5: I want to go home!

MARKETING DIRECTOR: Okay then. Good work, everyone. See you Monday.

EXECUTIVE #2: Hold on –

MARKETING DIRECTOR: *I said "See you Monday!"*

It should be noted that on the next bottle of Hershey's chocolate syrup I bought, there was simply a fat cartoon cow on all fours, saying "It's a fat free food!"
