

## Starbucks Coffee Company – Earth Month

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Agency: Edelman  
Client: Starbucks Coffee Company



**SUMMARY:** When someone replaces one paper cup with a reusable mug, the action saves seven trees each year. Now consider the 4 billion cups used by Starbucks customers annually and their impact. In a continuing effort to reduce its environmental impact, Starbucks saw this as a powerful way to engage consumers and stakeholders to spark change and enhance Starbucks environmental leadership position. During April 2010, dubbed “Earth Month,” the Edelman New York team, as part of the greater international account team, executed a multiphased integrated communications campaign focused on five milestones that underscored Starbucks commitment to environmental responsibility and customer experience.

### RESEARCH

With millions of customers visiting more than 16,000 Starbucks locations around the globe daily, Starbucks recognized the tremendous opportunity to make an environmental impact by encouraging consumers and stakeholders to work together. Responsibility has long been woven into Starbucks culture and vision, and continuing to innovate and use its scale for good is key to living up to the company’s mission. Critical insights gained from research which guided program planning included:

#### FOCUSING ON A RELEVANT ISSUE

- Environment is the No. 1 social cause consumers care about (*Edelman goodpurpose study*)
- Nearly two-thirds of people (65%) have more trust in a brand that is ethically and socially responsible (*Edelman goodpurpose study*)

#### ACKNOWLEDGING DESIRE FOR ENGAGEMENT

- Starbucks customers used reusable mugs 4.4 million times more in 2009 than 2008, suggesting rising awareness of issue (*SBUX*)
- 67% of core customers consider themselves environmentally responsible (*SBUX STI Market Research Report*)
- 55% believe social responsibility is an important factor when choosing between brands (*SBUX STI Market Research Report*)

#### BECOMING FAMILIAR WITH CONVERSATIONS

- Reviewed archived Starbucks media inquiries to understand awareness and interest
- Learned that “recycling” and “cups” are the top two all-time social responsibility “ideas” on MyStarbucksIdea.com

### KNOWING HOW TO REACH TARGETS

- **Message Penetration:** Audiences need to hear information about a company 3-5 times to believe the data is credible (*Edelman Trust Barometer*)
  - *Action:* Engaged multi-media channels, tailored to each tactic
- **Diversified Approach:** Multiple information sources enhance credibility (*Edelman Trust Barometer*)
  - *Action:* Segmented targets to build cross-channel dialogue
- **Third-Party Validation:** Academics and NGOs rank among the highest credible sources (*Edelman Trust Barometer*)
  - *Action:* Leveraged relationships with CI and MIT

### ANALYZING THE AUDIENCE

Earth Month communications spanned a wide range of audiences, creating dynamic conversations with media, consumers and stakeholders around the world.

The following audiences were categorized into groups ranging from “light green” to “dark green” stakeholders based on their environmental awareness:

- **Consumers / Consumer Media:** Core Starbucks customer demographics, environmentally conscious customers and frequent visitors
  - *a.k.a. “Light Green”:* Relevant for retail promotions to build program awareness and increase store traffic
- **Influencers:** Third-Party Influencers (environmental & consumer), including celebrities, NGO partners (e.g., CI), and “Dark Green” media and bloggers
  - *a.k.a. “Dark Green”:* Relevant for stakeholder-centric initiatives (e.g., Global Responsibility Report) to raise awareness of Starbucks leadership role in developing recycling solutions
- **Partners (Employees):** Starbucks store and non-store partners (employees) and internal audiences
  - *a.k.a. “General Green”:* Relevant for internal audiences upholding Starbucks responsibility mission

### PLANNING

#### IDENTIFYING OBJECTIVES

First, the team narrowed down key communications objectives to measure as benchmarks to success.

- Inspire U.S. customers and stakeholders to join Starbucks in its efforts to reduce waste and positively impact the environment by driving participation in Earth Month programs
- Advance public awareness of Starbucks environmental leadership and build upon the current reputation in terms of commitment to environmental stewardship

## DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

Strategy for Earth Month stemmed from an approach that encompassed a series of specific but related strategies for five key milestones.

### **OVERALL EARTH MONTH CAMPAIGN STRATEGY**

- Harmonize communication throughout five key milestones to ensure maximum message penetration
- Develop a diverse range of angles to extend media outreach for broad impact
- Leverage third-party partnerships to add credibility

### **FIVE KEY MILESTONES STRATEGY**

- **Milestone 1: April 15 "Green Spark" Tumbler Promotion**
  - *Spark excitement and behavioral change by driving consumer traffic to stores for a retail promotion offering free coffee to customers using a tumbler/reusable mug*
- **Milestone 2: 2009 Global Responsibility (GR) Report**
  - *Inform stakeholders about continued action toward Starbucks responsibility commitments using new interactive format*
- **Milestone 3: Second Cup Summit**
  - *Communicate Starbucks leadership role in working to develop a comprehensive recyclable cup solution*
- **Milestone 4: Spring Street Event (New York City's First LEED Starbucks)**
  - *Leverage NYC store opening to increase awareness of Starbucks commitment to doing business responsibly*
- **Milestone 5: Thought Leadership – Executive Opportunities**
  - *Advance Starbucks environmental narrative and thought-leadership platforms*

## EXECUTION

### **Budget:**

#### **Tumbler Promotion**

- Developed and activated on-site media protocol and reactive media strategy for Madison Square Park advertisement shoot
- Led strategic coordination of international launch through simultaneous communications in tandem with Canada, Europe, Asia-Pacific and Latin America to drive customer participation for tumbler promotion
- Executed key media relations activities from NY, including planning and execution of media and influencer mailers and proactive outreach
- Unified messages globally while staying locally relevant; aligned with Starbucks global commitments and campaign assets

#### **FY09 GR Report Launch**

- NY—based team led collaboration with Starbucks CSR team and external stakeholders to develop messaging and ensure comprehensive reporting

#### **Starbucks Second Cup Summit**

- Led strategy and media outreach in support of Cup Summit in Boston, which convened supply chain stakeholders, academics, manufacturers, policy leaders (even competitors) to work toward a recyclable cup solution

#### **Spring Street Event**

- Leveraged NYC store opening to showcase Starbucks environmental commitments through the lens of green building/design
- Hosted roundtable sessions with Starbucks SVP of Store Design and Director of Environmental Impact for environmental, design and local media

#### **Thought Leadership**

- NY-based team orchestrated executive speaking engagements at the Milken Institute Global and Fortune Brainstorm Green Conferences to advance position about environmental stewardship and reached leading sustainability audiences

## EVALUATION

The campaign achieved tremendous success in positioning Starbucks as an environmental leader in the following ways:

#### **Achieved Objectives**

- *Inspire U.S. customers and stakeholders to join Starbucks in efforts to improve their environmental impact by driving participation in Earth Month programs*
  - **1.2 million customers participated** in the tumbler promotion on April 15
  - **47,536 consumers have pledged to use tumblers** (and counting)
- *Advance awareness of Starbucks environmental leadership and reputation*
  - **Enhanced customer perceptions of Starbucks as environmentally responsible by 57%-80%** among customer segments

#### **Raised Awareness of Messages**

- **Strong message penetration – 87% neutral to positive media coverage throughout campaign** (*Strategy One's Comparative Media Index Report*)
- **1,855 total media placements** resulting in **297,867,929 media impressions**
  - **20 national broadcast** placements; **265 local broadcast TV hits** across **top 50 DMA markets**
  - **12 national print stories** (long and short lead)
  - Daytime talk show segment/giveaway on *The View*
- More than 400 influencers and stakeholders engaged during April campaign