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# Lessons Learned from Advertising Natural Family Planning

by

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In 2003, Wichita, Kansas had a unique and exciting opportunity. The Family of the Americas Foundation approached the diocesan Natural Family Planning Office to test market an NFP awareness campaign in the city. The goal was to promote Natural Family Planning (NFP) from the “highways and byways” and reach out to the entire community. When the NFP Office brought news of the proposal to the then-Bishop of Wichita, Most Reverend Thomas J. Olmsted, he enthusiastically gave his approval and active support. The resulting three-month long awareness campaign reached the majority of city residents and had a significant impact. In the eight months after the start of the campaign the NFP Office had over 700 calls inquiring about NFP from both Catholics and non-Catholics. In contrast, there were 196 calls in the eight months preceding the commencement of the campaign. As a result of the increased interest in NFP, twelve new teacher-couples were recruited and an additional 150 couples were trained in the practice of NFP.

## **Background**

The NFP awareness campaign was part of a larger project, underwritten by the Family of the Americas Foundation. The primary purposes of the test market in Wichita were to raise awareness of NFP and elicit inquiries from the community at-large. The media utilized in the campaign included publicity, print (both English and Spanish language),

billboards, and radio announcements. The target market was the female population of the Wichita Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) of childbearing age (18 to 45-years-old). The geographic area included Sedgwick County and the town of Andover in adjoining Butler County.

Prior to the commencement of the campaign, Melissa Cohlma Marketing conducted exploratory research in collaboration with Young Marketing Research. The survey interviewed 307 women by telephone. This research found that, in open-ended questioning, 97% of the women sampled were aware of at least one method of birth control or family planning. About 68% were aware of natural options and 20% identified NFP as an alternative.

Forty-seven percent of the respondents in the exploratory study said they were interested in learning about a “new, natural method.” When asked whether they found the idea of specifically using NFP appealing, 38% felt it was appealing and 41% said it was unappealing. When asked about past usage, 29% reported that they have used an NFP method. Regarding future usage, 38% said they would consider NFP.

The women surveyed who were opposed to adopting NFP cited “too much effort”, “unreliability”, and busy lives as reasons for not using it. Respondents who were open to NFP cited a desire for a healthier lifestyle and concerns about the effects of hormones on the body. Many were especially concerned about a possible link between the use of artificial hormones and cancer.<sup>1</sup>

Wichita is known as a test market because the demographics are representative of the overall United States. According to the Bureau of the Census, in 2002 the Wichita MSA had a total population of 541,692.<sup>2</sup> When classified by PRIZM group (market segments by lifestyle) the two largest segments are “inner suburbs” (empty-nesters, mobile city singles, blue-collar families & aging couples) and the “affluentials” (upwardly mobile young singles & couples, white-collar suburban families) accounting for 24.1% and 18.1% of the market, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

The 2003 Scarborough profile of Wichita reported that about 19% of Wichitans listen to the radio during a specific daypart within the morning weekday drive time period (compared to a national average of 22%). The corresponding figures for the evening commuted time period is 16% for Wichita and a national average of 18%.<sup>4</sup>

### **Advertising a Spiritual Message**

The Natural Family Planning Office was faced with an unusual challenge in creating the advertising message in that NFP is an integral part of the Catholic ethic. The theological basis for promoting NFP is based on the Church’s understanding of “natural law”, or divine law imprinted in

each person that is accessible by reason.<sup>5</sup> According to Church doctrine, separating procreation (i.e., “life-making”) from the conjugal act (i.e., “love-making”) is contrary to divine will as expressed in natural law. The challenge was to have a message that reflected the Church’s teaching that decisions regarding procreation encompass the full range of the human being (physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, and intellectual)<sup>5</sup> and yet also be culturally appropriate. A tag line was chosen that would sound attractive and, together with the radio spots and billboards, be true to the Church’s teaching. The tag line chosen was “99% effective. 100% natural. Your body knows.”<sup>TM</sup>

The promotional campaign commissioned by the NFP Office consisted of a combination of publicity activities, radio spots, print ads in the diocesan newspaper, and four billboards placed along high-traffic roads. The radio spots were purchased from fifteen stations, including an Hispanic radio station. A total of three different 60-second commercials were produced and aired. The radio spots featured women discussing NFP as an alternative to birth control. With soothing piano music in the background, the word “natural” was mentioned several times in the dialogue.

The billboards were strategically placed along Wichita’s main transportation arteries. They featured a smiling woman sitting on a bed, looking dreamily at a rose. The tag line, along with the words “Natural Family Planning” and a phone number, were prominently displayed. Two of the billboard locations were set up on a rotating basis.

The publicity component of the campaign encompassed both Church and secular media. Bishop Olmsted encouraged the diocesan priests to include an insert in the Sunday bulletins. The Bishop also used his column in the diocesan newspaper to support the effort. In the secular media, the publicity included two interviews on the local television news. In addition, several letters to the editor regarding NFP were published in the *Wichita Eagle*.<sup>6</sup> The Spanish language radio station interviewed several NFP instructors and included the NFP classes in the community calendar.

The campaign, which lasted from September 22, 2003 through December 12, 2003, was extensive. The reach of the radio advertisements (a measure of the number of different individuals exposed) over the three-month period was estimated to be 95.7%. The average frequency for radio (the number of times an individual is exposed to the message) was 23.4. The estimated reach for the outdoor media was 87.6% and the average frequency was 58.1.<sup>7</sup>

When an inquiry was made, a script was followed. Callers asking what NFP is were given the following description: “Natural Family Planning is a method for achieving or avoiding pregnancy that is based on the observation of certain naturally-occurring signs in the woman which indicates the fertile and infertile phases of her menstrual cycle. The

Ovulation Method is based on a woman’s awareness of the importance of a cervical secretion which appears regularly during her reproductive years and is a natural sign of fertility.” Callers were also invited to be immediately enrolled in a class. Those who enrolled received callbacks as reminders of the class. Callbacks were also used for those who requested brochures and other material.

### Caller Profiles

Those who contacted the NFP Office either by telephone or walk-in were asked a set of questions regarding personal information and what specific advertising prompted the inquiry.<sup>8</sup> The inquirer’s name, address, sex, marital status, age, religion, and which media they were exposed to (radio station, billboard location, newspaper print ad, personal recommendation) were captured in the questionnaire. Based on data from the questionnaire, a caller database was assembled. The data was collected between September, 2003 and March, 2004.<sup>9</sup> The data set contained 702 records, although some records were incomplete.<sup>10</sup>

An examination of the data set revealed that the mean age of the callers was 27.5 years, with a standard deviation of 6.6. The age distribution matched that of the target audience. The youngest caller was 16 and the oldest was 61 (a few mothers called on behalf of their daughters).

**Table 1: Caller Profile by Marital Status and Sex**

Status	Women		Men	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Married	371	63.0%	46	58.2%
Engaged	71	12.1%	16	20.3%
Single	74	12.6%	13	16.5%
Not reported	73	12.4%	4	5.1%
Total	589	100%	79	100%

When the callers were categorized by sex and marital status (Table 1, above), both expected and unexpected patterns emerged. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of inquirers were married or engaged. Interestingly, even though the advertising was intended for a female audience, about 12% of the callers were male, indicating a strong interest among men.<sup>11</sup> Another interesting finding is that men tended to be relatively more forthcoming in

reporting their marital status. Four out of 79 men (5.1%) did not report their marital status in the questionnaire. The corresponding percentage for women was 12.4%, which is at about twice the rate of men.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that some women were perhaps concerned about privacy or otherwise did not feel completely comfortable sharing personal information with the NFP Office. Data was also collected on which radio station prompted the inquiry. The distribution of radio listenership by radio format is shown in Table 2.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 2: Distribution of Responses by Radio Format**

<b>Format</b>	<b>Callers</b>		<b>Attendees</b>		<b>Follow-up Rate</b>
Modern Rock	108	21.0%	15	13.9%	13.9%
Christian	81	15.7%	28	25.9%	34.6%
Country	70	13.6%	20	18.5%	28.6%
Hispanic	67	13.0%	11	10.2%	16.4%
Adult Contemporary	65	12.6%	16	14.8%	24.6%
Classic Rock	60	11.7%	10	9.3%	16.7%
Contemporary Hit	33	6.4%	3	2.8%	9.1%
News	18	3.5%	4	3.7%	22.2%
Oldies	13	2.5%	1	0.9%	7.7%
Total	515	100.0%	108	100.0%	

The first set of columns shows the number and relative distribution of callers citing radio stations carrying the format. The second pair of columns enumerates how many of those callers followed up on the call (i.e., came to an introductory NFP training session.). The last column shows the follow-up rate, or percentage of callers in each category who attended a session. Surprisingly, stations carrying modern rock accounted for the highest volume of inquiries (108 callers, or 21.0% of all callers). However, these callers were much less prevalent among session attendees as only 15 callers came to a session, yielding a follow-up rate of 13.9%. Christian radio listeners showed the highest rate of follow-up, with 28 out of 81 callers attending (34.6%).

The modern rock format is worthy of attention. As shown later, these listeners who called didn't divulge much personal information. Apparently, the radio spots caught the attention of these listeners but they appear unsure of committing to NFP. These results underscore the

importance of carefully choosing the radio stations that carry the advertisements. Each radio audience reacted differently to the message.

### Callers' Religious Affiliation

The Church's emphasis on NFP in marriage preparation makes it likely that Catholics are more familiar with NFP than non-Catholics. In addition, Bishop Olmsted visibly supported the effort during the campaign. Consequently, some analysis was done to see if those callers who self-reported as Catholic differed from other groups.

Respondents were divided into three categories: "Catholic", a "non-Catholic" (which would include any faith other than Catholicism, including no religious tradition), or "not reported." Most of these non-Catholic religions were Protestant but there were a few Muslims. There was also a pagan, an atheist, and an agnostic among the callers. Overall 12.2% of Wichitans are Catholic,<sup>14</sup> while approximately 22% of the inquiries came from self-reported Catholics.

Table 3 (below) provides a breakout of callers by religion and gender. Of interest is that 20.5% of the women did not have their religious background recorded while that information was missing for 10.1% of men. This, again, may reflect women's hesitation in conveying personal information.

**Table 3: Caller Profile by Religion and Sex**

Religion	Women		Men		Total	
Catholic	129	21.9%	16	20.3%	145	21.7%
Non-Catholic	339	57.6%	55	69.6%	394	59.0%
Not Reported	21	20.5%	8	10.1%	129	19.3%
Total	589	100.0%	79	100.0%	668	100.0%

To help gauge media effectiveness across station formats, Catholics' listening preferences were compared to other groups: The data showed that Catholics and non-Catholics had different radio listening preferences. Approximately 40% of the Catholic respondents who reported hearing a radio announcement heard it on KYQQ, the Spanish language radio station. The next most popular radio formats for Catholics were adult contemporary and classic rock. For non-Catholic callers, the predominant

radio format was Christian radio, with modern rock being the second most popular station type, see Table 4 (facing page).

**Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Radio Format and Religion**

<b>Format</b>	<b>Totals</b>		<b>Catholic</b>		<b>Non-Catholic</b>		<b>Not Reported</b>	
Modern Rock	108	21.0%	11	8.8%	64	21.5%	33	35.9%
Christian	81	15.7%	5	4.0%	72	24.2%	4	4.3%
Country	70	13.6%	13	10.4%	48	16.1%	9	9.8%
Hispanic	67	13.0%	53	2.4%	7	2.3%	7	7.6%
Adult Contemporary	65	12.6%	16	12.8%	43	14.4%	6	6.5%
Classic Rock	60	11.7%	15	12.0%	27	9.1%	18	19.6%
Contemporary Hit	33	6.4%	4	3.2%	18	6.0%	11	12.0%
News	18	3.5%	6	4.8%	9	3.0%	3	3.3%
Oldies	13	2.5%	2	1.6%	10	3.4%	1	1.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Callers' Ethnic Affiliation**

The U.S. Bureau of the Census estimated that in 2002, 8.8% of the population in Wichita was Hispanic or Latino.<sup>15</sup> Of the responders to the NFP campaign who reported listening to a radio station, 10.3% tuned in to the Spanish language station. For the purposes of this analysis, Hispanics were defined as listeners of a Spanish language radio station. While this operational definition excludes Hispanics who listen to English language radio and includes non-Hispanics who tune into Spanish radio, nevertheless, this form of segmentation yields some useful insights.

Most of the Hispanic callers (53 out of 67 callers) were Catholic. Dividing the Catholic inquiries into Hispanic and non-Hispanic revealed some insight into the cultural differences among Catholic respondents. Among Catholic listeners of Spanish radio, 51 were women and only one was a man. This sex ratio may be a reflection of attitudes prevalent in the Hispanic culture. In contrast, among the non-Hispanic Catholic callers there were 78 females (83.9%) and 15 males (16.1%)

Table 5 (below) brings out some other characteristics of the Hispanic callers. About half of these callers did not have their marital status identified, compared to 3.2% of non-Hispanic Catholics. In addition, only one Hispanic caller stated that she was engaged, although married Hispanics apparently were more comfortable with divulging their marital status. This data confirms that an NFP awareness campaign must be sensitive to the multifaceted nature of the target population.

**Table 5: Catholic Callers by Marital Status and Ethnicity**

Status	Hispanic		Non-Hispanic		Total	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Married	24	45.3%	63	66.3%	87	58.8%
Engaged	1	1.9%	13	13.7%	14	9.5%
Single	1	1.9%	16	16.8%	17	11.5%
Not Reported	27	50.9%	3	3.2%	30	20.3%
Total	53	100.0%	95	100.0%	148	100.0%

### NFP Training Session Attendance

Of particular interest to the NFP Office was the rate of follow-up, or the percentage of inquiry calls resulting in attendance at an introductory NFP training session. As discussed previously, listeners to rock stations accounted for many inquiries but relatively few follow-ups.

**Table 6: Callers by Marital Status and Attendance**

Status	Attendees		Non-Attendees		Total	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Married	111	74.5%	325	58.8%	436	62.1%
Engaged	21	14.1%	70	12.7%	91	13.0%
Single	13	8.7%	81	14.6%	94	13.4%
Not Reported	4	2.7%	77	13.9%	81	11.5%
Total	149	100.0%	553	100.0%	702	100.0%

As can be seen in Table 6 (above), the caller's marital status is a predictor of the likelihood of follow-up. Married and engaged callers had a greater propensity to attend a session than the other two groups of callers. One hundred eleven out of 436 married callers (25.5%) attended and 21 out of 91 engaged callers (23.1%) attended. In contrast, 13.8% of single callers and only 4.9% of "non-reported" callers attended.

Callers with their marital status not recorded deserve special attention. Out of these callers, only four went to an NFP training session; all the others did not attend. This implies that the level of interest in NFP may have been formed prior to or in conjunction with the first call. Callers with a stronger level of interest in NFP seemed to have been much more willing to share private information in that crucial initial contact.

In examining attendees by religion (Table 7), the same pattern for non-reports was repeated; those with missing data were heavily represented in the non-attendee category. In light of the fact that 12% of the population of Wichita is Catholic, the finding that close to 30% attendees were Catholic indicates that the Church's message about NFP is effectively reaching the Catholic population.

**Table 7: Callers by Religion and Attendance**

Religion	Attendees		Non-Attendees		Total	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Catholic	43	28.9%	106	19.2%	149	21.2%
Non-Catholic	93	62.4%	321	58.0%	414	59.0%
Not Reported	13	8.7%	126	22.8%	139	19.8%
Total	149	100.0%	553	100.0%	702	100.0%

There were some characteristics which did not seem to have an influence on follow-up. The caller's gender did not affect the probability of attending a session. Likewise, age and ethnic background (Hispanic/non-Hispanic) also weren't factors in attendance rates.

### **Some Conclusions**

The Diocese of Wichita has been successful in eliciting a response from the general public on a topic that is difficult to discuss in public –Natural Family Planning. Hundreds of inquiries to the NFP Office were a direct

consequence of the campaign. In addition, several physicians called and offered their help. Many non-Catholics responded favorably to the program.<sup>16</sup>

An examination of the data tabulated during and after the campaign revealed that the callers were not a homogenous group, but consisted of at least four distinct groups. Each of these groups exhibited its own behavioral response to the campaign and appeared to have a different level of comfort with NFP prior to calling. The existence of a segmented market provides the opportunity to enhance campaign effectiveness by tailoring the Church's message to each subgroup.

One group was the Hispanic population. The use of the in-language media was very effective in reaching this segment. Predominantly Catholic, virtually all the callers were female. This group tended not to share much personal information but the follow-up attendance at the training sessions was good. The non-Hispanic Catholics, like the Hispanics, showed good commitment to follow-up. This group also enjoyed listening to top 40 radio. It is very likely that they were previously exposed to NFP so they are already predisposed to the idea. These Catholics were comfortable with talking with a Church ministry as evidenced by the low number of "not reported" data.

The non-Catholics (predominantly Protestants) listened to Christian radio. Like Catholics, they seemed at ease with discussing NFP with a Church organization. However, they were less likely to follow up than Catholics at a session. The exploratory research indicated that they may have been aware of the existence of NFP prior to the campaign. However, it is not clear what level of knowledge they had about NFP.

The "casual" inquirers listened to modern rock. They were a sizeable group that tended to jump at the opportunity to call but hesitated in leaving personal information and were comparatively reluctant to follow up. This group tended to decide against NFP with the first contact, as evidenced by the high number of "non-reports" so the first call was critical. Further scrutiny to determine the reasons for hesitation would help reach this population more effectively.

An important lesson from this experience is that it underscored the value of detailed tracking. An unexpected finding was that the radio media that elicited the most calls was not the same that resulted in the highest attendance at the NFP sessions. The two-fold goals of the test market were to raise awareness and increase training. The two are not totally complementary as call volume did not automatically equate with call quality (i.e., probability of follow up).

This groundbreaking test market raised many questions for further study. However, most importantly, it clarified what questions should be asked in order to improve future campaigns. The Diocese of Wichita is now better equipped to enter the second phase of the test market.

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2. Bureau of the Census, 2002 American Community Survey Profile.
3. Arbitron, Summer 2003. The data was retrieved from RadioDaily New's website [http://www.radiodailynews.com/5-1\\_wichita.html](http://www.radiodailynews.com/5-1_wichita.html).
4. Eileen Davis Hudson, "Market Profile, Wichita, Kan."
5. For an explanation of natural law see the Catholic Catechism #1954-1960. The encyclical *Humanae Vitae* explains the Church's teachings on birth control and NFP.
6. Letters to the editor, *The Wichita Eagle*, January 13, 2004.
7. The audience delivery estimates were provided by a marketing firm retained by the NFP Office.
8. People who have been prompted to inquire about NFP through the campaign are generically called "callers" in this paper, although there have been a few walk-ins. As the advertisements specified only a telephone number, only those with some familiarity with the diocesan offices would have been able to be a walk-in.
9. For a rigorous analysis of the data, see Berendt and Leonard, "Profiles of Responders to a Natural Family Planning Awareness Campaign" (unpublished paper).
10. Marketing researchers traditionally assign nonreported data to two sources: administrative (i.e., interviewer or data processing) error or respondent error (i.e., refusal to answer). In the data set, missing data is nonrandom,<sup>8</sup> indicating that some people were reticent in sharing certain personal information with the NFP Office.
11. One male caller stated that he was looking for an alternative because the couple has "been having problems" with the pill.
12. The NFP Office was meticulous in administering the survey to all callers. The Spanish language advertisements referred inquirers to a different office, which was not fully staffed and callers sometimes left the information on an answering machine. Virtually all callers prompted by the Spanish language radio station were women. Even if not all of these callers were administered the survey, the finding that those sharing their marital status were predominantly married is valuable in understanding the Hispanic culture.
13. Formats were reported by most stations. In cases where the format was unavailable, the information was taken from the *Broadcast & Cable yearbook, 2001*.

14. The data on the Catholic population is available at:  
<http://www.catholicierarchy.org/country/scusl.html> (retrieved February 11, 2004).

15. Bureau of the Census. The 2002 American Community Survey,  
<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/Profiles/Single/2002/ACS/Tabular/380/38000US90401.htm>

16. For example, one non-Catholic respondent said, “This is a real gift – thank you for being here.”