How to Build Credibility for McDonald’s Balanced Lifestyle Efforts.

McDonald’s is a food service company that provides safe, quality and great tasting food, beverages, and snacks in a clean, dependable environment, very quickly, at a value, all adding up to a fun experience. McDonald’s is a franchised company, with more than 5,500 owner/operators, representing about 75% of its nearly 31,000 restaurants worldwide. McDonald’s is very decentralized as well, operating in 119 countries, with local, regional management responsible for its business operations in all respects.

The issue of obesity and increasing overweight trends is an important society issue. To successfully address these developing health developments, there is a range of roles and responsibilities necessary, ranging from personal, family and community roles to corporate and governmental obligations. What is the responsibility of a food service company such as McDonald’s?

McDonald’s is addressing this important issue with a range of Balanced Active Lifestyle (BAL) efforts that are comprised of three strategic components. First, there is an emphasis on providing a range of great tasting menu choices that McDonald’s customers feel good about, that regularly fit into their lives, while providing value. Second, McDonald’s continues to provide various means to educate its customers with nutritional information that is accessible so they can make the best choices for themselves and their families. Lastly, McDonald’s is committed to promoting physical activity since maintaining a healthy weight involves an energy balance of both calorie in and calories out.

A full report on McDonald’s BAL efforts are available at [http://www.mcdonalds.com/corp/values/balance](http://www.mcdonalds.com/corp/values/balance)

The scope and breadth of tangible progress along the three pillars of BAL strategy (Menu Choice, Education, and Physical Activity) have been significant. For example, McDonald’s has an independent Global Advisory Council on Balanced Lifestyles and they have applauded McDonald’s efforts, while encouraging and urging McDonald’s to do more. While the reality of McDonald’s progress is quite remarkable (for example, it now sells the most salads, apples and tomatoes in the U.S.; and in, fiscal year 2004, comparable sales increased nearly 7%, the best performance in 17 years, with 2005 year-to-date performance following a similar growth pattern), the perception of McDonald’s in the media, with many opinion-makers and certain segments of the consuming public remains a challenge. Accordingly, the proposed practicum will be charged to:

- Review and evaluate what McDonald’s has done in the past to encourage a balanced lifestyle
- Assess perception of these efforts both with in-depth interviews with stakeholders and through an examination of published articles, websites and weblogs
- Propose 2-3 practical, stereotype busting specific ideas that will build credibility and break through the mythology and clutter with the reasonable majority—not the activist community. The question to answer is this: What can McDonald’s do to get more people to understand, believe, and trust that McDonald’s food can regularly fit into their lives?