



How One Woman Is Using Lemons to Educate the World About Breast Cancer

Corrine Ellsworth Beaumont’s goal is simple: Educate every woman in the world about breast cancer symptoms. After her awareness visualization went viral, she’s one step closer.

BY HAL CONICK | STAFF WRITER

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Goal

Four months after Corrine Ellsworth Beaumont resigned from her job to focus on the nonprofit she founded, her phone buzzed—it didn’t seem to stop for three weeks.

“I wasn’t prepared for the amount of press I got in those first three weeks,” says Beaumont, founder of Worldwide Breast Cancer and creator of the “Know Your Lemons” campaign. “I would see inquiries coming in from Germany one day ... then I’d see stuff coming in from Italy and Thailand. I had people contacting me on Facebook, saying they’d seen my stuff in Paraguay.”

Since 2003, Beaumont had been

working on “Know Your Lemons,” a visualization of breast cancer symptoms represented by a dozen lemons in an egg carton. One day in January 2017, the campaign went viral.

Erin Smith Chieze, a breast cancer survivor, posted the “Know Your Lemons” image on Facebook, writing that a similar photo helped her identify her own stage 4 breast cancer symptom: an indentation. The image had saved her life, she said. Rather than posting hearts, which some Facebook users had been doing as a secret nod to breast cancer survivors, Chieze wrote that people should post realistic images of breast cancer symptoms to inform unwitting breast cancer sufferers.

The “Know Your Lemons” image fit the bill, and people took notice. Within days, Chieze’s post and the “Know Your Lemons” image were shared 47,000 times, reaching about 3 million people and getting picked up by multiple media outlets.

Beaumont was stunned. Her goal for “Know Your Lemons” was to educate every woman about the symptoms of breast cancer. With the shares and media requests piling up, her goal seemed within reach.

But with success came struggles: One night, she had to work frantically to rebuild her website, which crashed after a surge in traffic. “It was a victim of its own success,” she says. Beaumont also spent hours messaging journalists for corrections to misstated facts and to ask for credit to her organization for the “Know Your Lemons” image.

Finally, she secured interviews with the BBC, CNN and multiple magazines. After 14 years, it was her campaign’s greatest exposure. Beaumont could barely keep up, but she was one step closer to her goal.

Action

Beaumont knows that reaching every woman is a lofty goal, but she believes that a well-designed visual marketing campaign can appeal to everyone, regardless of culture. But for an image to reach every woman, Beaumont’s design had to account for literacy challenges, social taboos and fear of cancer.

Beaumont, who lost both of her grandmothers to breast cancer, studied design for more than a decade at Utah State University and Buckinghamshire University. She wanted to find a way to increase awareness of breast cancer symptoms and believed an image-based campaign was best. (She wrote in her doctoral thesis that most people don’t read wordy educational materials.)

Beaumont tested and researched the best ways to use visuals to educate a diverse audience; instead of segmenting, she believed the best idea was to create an image that appealed to everybody. The lemons were perfect; the image showed



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detailed breast cancer symptoms without being too cheeky or too graphic.

“I tried to design in a way that would work for as many people as possible and not be so dependent on text,” Beaumont says, adding that many people across the world—including one in five people in the U.S.—have literacy challenges. “By having a visual that could communicate some really important concepts in a few seconds, we could get people interested in breast cancer and educate them at the same time.”

The campaign stormed into English-speaking countries through the virality of Chieze’s post, but Beaumont wanted to capitalize on the success; she quickly pushed the image to the rest of the world. WBC formed partnerships with educational partners around the world, telling them that they could use “Know Your Lemons” instead of creating new campaigns. Along the way, Beaumont refined the campaign based on the response it received—she’d often change

the formatting of the text to make the image inclusive for different text sizes in different languages. “Every day, we get someone from a different part of the world calling us, saying they’d like to use the materials,” she says. The campaign is now in 93 countries and has been translated to multiple languages, including Arabic, Spanish and Hindi.

“Know Your Lemons” has also passed early taboo tests; the image has been used by the Turkish government, local clinics in Kenya and has been posted in hospitals in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, an extremely conservative city just outside of Mecca and Medina, two of Islam’s holiest cities. “It’s a pretty good indication that they were able to overcome these censorship issues affiliated with breasts and cancer,” Beaumont says. “People don’t like talking about cancer, either. But we make it friendly.”

Chris Bevol, executive vice president of health care agency ReviveHealth, says that the euphemistic-but-clear design of the “Know Your Lemons” campaign allows it to bypass the universal barrier of talking frankly about the human body. “You like to think we can all be adults and just talk about this stuff, but when you do it that way, there’s a resistance to wanting to talk about it,” he says. “But it’s also not as effective. It’s like advertising Nike, but instead of saying, ‘Just Do It,’ I would be saying, ‘Buy Our Shoes: They Help You Run.’ Being so literal and descriptive [doesn’t work].”

That’s the great thing about using lemons, Beaumont says: The euphemistic realism of the campaign allowed her to show symptoms without disgusting or offending people. “We removed all the barriers that have kept people from learning about breast cancer by giving them 12 lemons,” she says.

Result

During the initial three-week rush of media, Beaumont says that the campaign was seen more than 166 million times. These views came mainly from English-speaking countries—Beaumont doesn’t have an exact count of the total since the first three weeks, but she estimates that

more than 200 million people have seen the campaign.

The next step for WBC is to translate the campaign into more languages. Soon, the campaign will be translated into Mandarin, the most-spoken language in the world. Additionally, Beaumont says WBC will soon push out a campaign in Lagos, Nigeria, where 75% of women with breast cancer are diagnosed at stage 4—a big difference when compared with the 10% of women diagnosed at stage 4 in the U.S.

“We’re working with a health partner [in Lagos] to change that number so that more women can survive breast cancer,” Beaumont says. The results will serve as one metric of success of the campaign.

The campaign will also continue in English-speaking countries. Beaumont says that WBC will be partnering with a U.K. charity in October to roll out “Know Your Lemons” as part of a large-scale Breast Cancer Awareness Month campaign. In September, WBC will launch an app that will guide women through breast cancer self-examinations. The app will also feature a tool for booking a mammogram.

Busy times are expected, but so is money. This is where the organization has the most problems. WBC’s most recently posted revenue was \$68,804 in 2016, up slightly from its 2015 revenue of \$48,647. The organization hasn’t had an easy time attracting donors, Beaumont says, even with 2017’s virality. Many people don’t realize WBC is a charity, she says, so the organization has set up an online shop and put a button for donations on the website. It’s also recently placed an occasional pop-up on the website that asks readers, “Did you know we are a nonprofit?”

“We tried a number of different things, and it’s just not caught on,” she says. “We’re still figuring out that piece of the puzzle.”

Even so, Beaumont has enjoyed her hectic year of educating women across the world and pocketing a phone that seems to always be buzzing.

“It’s exciting,” she says. “Every day is different.” **m**

worldwide breast cancer

COMPANY

Worldwide Breast Cancer

HEADQUARTERS

Lewisville, Idaho; working virtually from the U.K. and Australia

CAMPAIGN TIMELINE:

Beaumont created the “Know Your Lemons” image in 2003 and has been refining it since. She founded Worldwide Breast Cancer in 2014 and the “Know Your Lemons” image went viral in January 2017.

RESULTS

166 million views in the three weeks of virality in January 2017 and an estimated 200 million views since the campaign went viral