

# **Frito-Lay Is Going to Rickroll You—But This Time Rick Astley's in on the Joke**

At first blush, it might seem disingenuous for a snack conglomerate to offer unsolicited advice about how consumers looking to lose weight can drop a few pounds in the new year.

Enter pop star Rick Astley and his 1987 hit, “Never Gonna Give You Up,” however, and the guidance suddenly seems lighthearted and fun—or at least that’s the intent behind the upcoming Snack a Little Smarter campaign from Frito-Lay.

“We’re really looking forward to seeing fans’ reaction to the use of the song in this New Year’s resolution context,” said Ciara Dilley, vice president of marketing at Frito-Lay.



A storyboard from Frito-Lay gives a broad overview of the main spot.

While details are still vague on what exactly is to come from Astley, who was shooting on Dec. 16 in London, campaign elements will almost certainly lean in to song-related puns while pushing better-for-you brands such as Smartfood, SunChips and Off the Eaten Path.

“Our target audience is ... anyone looking to embrace a well-rounded lifestyle and mindset, who might be heading into the new year with a new goal,” Dilley said. “Just like Rick sings, 2021 should be about not giving up what you love in your pursuit of joy and happiness.”

The campaign will launch in the U.S. the week after Christmas with a media buy heavily focused on streaming TV—including Amazon OTT—as well as internet radio via Spotify and social media, which will stress TikTok thanks in part to “Rick’s popularity on the platform,” Dilley said. (He reportedly joined in November and has 1.5 million followers.)

The campaign will also include point-of-sale displays and influencer partnerships.

In an interview with Adweek, Astley said the campaign was a good fit given his own focus on healthy eating. (For his take on brand values, homemade pandemic content, unexpected TikTok stardom and the “magic dust” sprinkled in the studio the day he recorded his biggest hit, see our Q&A [here](#).)

Pop culture and nostalgia are familiar territory for Frito-Lay. In January, the snack giant used MC Hammer and his 1990 hit “U Can’t Touch This” to push Cheetos during the Super Bowl. And about a month before, it tapped Anna Kendrick to sing about her Favorite Things in the brand’s first-ever holiday spot.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, however, parent company PepsiCo’s business has had mixed results. More consumers eating at home boosted demand for snacks and packaged foods, while restrictions on restaurants hurt soda sales. During PepsiCo’s second quarter, Frito-Lay North America was up 6% compared to the same time last year. Meanwhile, Quaker Foods grew 23%. The company’s beverage unit—its largest by revenue—declined 7%, contributing to an overall drop of 3.1% in company sales.

“This is going to be a roller coaster,” PepsiCo CEO Ramon Laguarta told analysts during a July earnings call.



Business has become more stable since then, with PepsiCo reporting a 5.3% net revenue gain in the third quarter—thanks in part to a rebound in its beverage segment.

In October, the snack giant debuted a campaign starring actor Tracee Ellis Ross, who agonizes over which snack to pick from a pantry filled with Frito-Lay brands. More recently, PepsiCo published an online recipe hub and a Cheetos-themed cookbook to provide some creative inspiration in the kitchen as much of the country continues to make meals at home.

The lead creative agency for its newest campaign with Astley is the Marketing Arm.

Snack a Little Smarter is part of a larger portfolio campaign

from Frito-Lay called "New Year New You."

Recommended articles

<https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/frito-lay-is-going-to-rickroll-you-but-this-time-rick-astleys-in-on-the-joke/>