

April 4, 2014

Don Thompson, President & CEO
McDonald's Corp.
2111 McDonalds Dr,
Oak Brook, IL 60523

Dear Mr. Thompson,

In just the past month, McDonalds has sponsored some of the very worst broadcast content with its advertising dollars, including:

- An episode of *Family Guy* that joked about pedophilia (Peter Griffin refers to Mozart's "The Magic Flute in A Minor" as a "pedophile opera," then tells a little league player he still has "the best ass on the field.")
- An episode of the CW's youth-targeted period drama *Reign* that [touted a not-safe-for-network-TV version online that featured two explicit sex scenes](#).
- Multiple episodes of the Fox serial-killer drama *The Following*, [including one particularly gruesome episode that showed a woman's throat being slit open](#).

The juxtaposition of this historically family brand with such graphic and disturbing content is jarring, to say the least, but it is not an anomaly. It is consistent with a long-term trend that we have observed with great concern for the last few years.

A little over a month ago, I posted [an open letter](#) to you expressing our disappointment at the turn McDonald's has taken with its advertising in recent years. In 2007, the PTC ranked McDonalds ranked as one of the ten best television sponsors because of its avoidance of graphically violent, profane, or sexually explicit programming. For the past three years, McDonalds has ranked among the worst TV sponsors.

I think it is not a coincidence that at the same time McDonalds abandoned its family focus, sales started to decline.

McDonalds' legacy is that of a brand that cares about communities. Ray Kroc said, "The basis for our entire business is that we are ethical, truthful and dependable. It takes time to build a reputation. We are not promoters. We are business people with a solid, permanent, constructive ethical program that will be in style... years from now even more than it is today."

It is this commitment that has made McDonalds a trusted brand and a family destination for generations. But these values that are the heart of the McDonalds brand have been betrayed by association with the content I described above (and there are more examples that I would be happy to share with you).

I think you know from McDonalds' own track record, that when you pursue family audiences and a family-friendly ad strategy, none of your competitors can touch you. Just a few years ago -- before McDonalds changed its advertising strategy and family focus -- sales outstripped the next-closest

competitor by \$20 billion. At the time, *QSR Magazine* reported, "If Subway were suddenly to merge with Burger King and Starbucks, McDonalds would still rank No. 1."

Mr. Thompson, I believe McDonalds can improve its fortunes by returning to a family focus.

Enclosed, you will find a copy of the research findings from the Association of National Advertisers' Alliance for Family Entertainment. They found that the context of the programming has a significant impact on viewers' perceptions of advertising. An additional 10.7% of the audience improved their opinion about purchasing a brand when the ad was placed in a "family friendly" program versus a program with adult themed content.

Moreover, proprietary research from America's biggest retailer, Walmart, found an 18% improvement in performance of an ad when the ad was placed in a positive program as opposed to a negative program. Researchers at Iowa State University also found that viewers are less likely to recall the products advertised if the ad appears in the context of a program that contains high levels of sex and violence.

We have created a page on our website specifically for you, so that you can see for yourself what your ad dollars are helping to pay for, and with links to these and other studies that show sponsors can improve their ROI on advertising by avoiding programs with explicit sexual content and graphic violence. These resources can be found at www.parentstv.org/McDonalds.

I would like to be able to report back to the PTC's 1.3 million members that McDonalds will correct course and avoid sponsoring programs that glorify violence, that trivialize rape and sexual abuse of children, and that degrade the culture. I think McDonalds is better than this. I hope you care enough about your brand to take corrective action immediately.

Sincerely,

Timothy F. Winter,

President, Parents Television Council

Cc: Mr. Andrew J. McKenna, Chairman of the Board
PTC Members