



PHOTO: FRANCIS VAN BEEK

OWNER-MARKETERS

THE DOLLOP GIRLS

In a startup, everyone's a marketer. Just ask Julia Crownshaw and Christie McCarthy, the two main brains behind Dollop Puddings, a recently launched range of handmade premium chilled desserts. Basically, their business plan boils down to making "really yummy puddings full of lots of good stuff and none of the bad stuff" and so far their extremely hands-on approach to marketing is paying dividends. McCarthy spills their secret recipes.

FMCG is a very tough market to break into. Are you crazy?

The reason we decided to leave our high-flying corporate lifestyles to play with wooden spoons and risk our life savings is actually largely hedonistic: after living overseas and being spoilt for choice, we came home to New Zealand to a real lack of good-quality dessert products. We ran some focus groups (aka crashed the dinner

parties of friends and families) and found that consumers agreed with us. Current brands were considered 'naïf' and not suitable for 'showing off to your mates'. And, in a world of mass manufacturing and global product standardisation, they wanted to see a return to the real thing.

How have you divided up the marketing tasks?

Julia is a guru food developer, so from a marketing perspective her key involvement is developing the actual products. As well as tasting and rating all her masterpieces, I'm responsible for the classical marketing elements, like strategy, comms, packaging, PR, POS and pricing. But we both live, breathe and promote the brand every day in some way. We are the face of the brand for most of the 'marketing' we do and, as a result, we've been branded the 'Dollop Girls'.

If you had to get three things right in the first year, what would they be?

First, embedding the brand and what it stands for in the minds of consumers. We've got a great product story to tell: handmade in New Zealand, no artificial colours or flavours and plenty of real ingredients. Second, managing the growth of the brand from an operational perspective. The downside of using all these real ingredients is that our products have a shelf life of just 14 days, which intensifies the need for accuracy in forecasting, manufacturing and distribution. And it becomes even more difficult when volumes are growing each week. Having the right systems in place and continuing to assess these systems is imperative. And third, to not die of exhaustion and get our social lives back. Working full-time day jobs and managing a business startup makes for a very busy agenda, but we can both see the potential for the brand, so hopefully the short-term pain is worth it.

What have been the most effective—and cost-effective—channels so far?

It's very early days but so far sales are well above forecast and growing, repeat purchase is strong and consumer feedback has been quite overwhelming, particularly from in-store sampling. Consumers love it. They get to try the product before they commit to making the purchase and we find the one-on-one dialogue invaluable. Consumers also love the fact they are talking to the owners of the brand, the bakers of the desserts and the developers of the product. And we really don't mind if they sprinkle on some berries and pass it off as their own.

Dollop Puddings are available from Farro and Nosh outlets

60 SECONDS WITH

FIONA WOOLLEY,
NZ POST

As the manager of market engagement and capability at New Zealand Post's Targeted Communications team, Fiona Woolley is nothing short of a direct-marketing evangelist. And she's spreading the 'gospel of DM'—whether off- or online—as far as humanly possible. So then, what's in the mail?

The best sources of ideas would potentially change the world, but they usually come at 3am and can't be recalled the next day. Luckily, I work with a team of bona fide super brains, who are experts in everything from data to digital strategy and specialise in brilliant ideas, such as our new data segmentation model, aptly named Genius.

The best ideas others have had really tap into people's psyches and create an emotional connection with your brand. One of my favourite ideas of the past few years was Harley Davidson's 'Freedom Box' direct-mail campaign, a box which, when opened, triggered a ventilator that sent fresh air into the recipient's face, immediately conjuring up that indescribable feeling of riding your Hog in the country on a sunny day. And, for the same reason, I also loved the online Irish Rugby sponsorship campaign 'Be the Difference'. I can't wait to see what Kiwi brands come up with for the Rugby World Cup.

If I had more budget I would use it to spread the gospel of direct marketing even wider by giving every single business in New Zealand a free DM campaign that would knock their socks off and allow them to experience first-hand the impressive cut-through and results that a targeted, relevant, creative campaign can deliver. Yes, you can tell a believer.

The toughest challenge for 2010 is managing to fit everything in. As we grow our multichannel 1-2-1 communications platform, my challenge is to communicate the changes and keep up with all of the latest developments in online and offline marketing, while still leaving time for industry association activity. There's certainly no rest for the wicked this year.

The most exciting aspect of marketing is that feeling you get when you achieve the ROI you oh-so-confidently said you would at the start of the campaign.

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