

Centura appoints marketing chief

By Caroline Parry

Centura Foods, the RHM Foods-owned company, has appointed former Allied Domecq marketer Mark Doorbar as its marketing director. He replaces Katherine Rose, who quit in May after less than a year in the role (*MW* May 12).

Doorbar has been working with Centura since May on an interim basis, but has now been appointed as Rose's permanent replacement. He will be responsible for marketing the Bisto, Paxo and Sharwood's brands.

It is understood that Doorbar has been working at Centura temporarily since leaving Allied as part of a restructure of the marketing team four years ago (*MW* July 5, 2001). He held a variety of roles at Allied, but his

last role was as senior vice-president for marketing.

Doorbar's appointment at Centura comes amid a restructure at parent company RHM, which has streamlined the operation from four divisions to three. The rejig led to a number of changes, including the promotion of Ginny Knox to chief operating officer of the culinary brands division in addition to her role as managing director of Centura Foods.

Independently, Paula Moss, then the divisional marketing director for RHM bread bakeries, left the company for personal reasons. Manor Bakeries marketing director Kate Taylor has been promoted to the role vacated by Moss. Taylor has been replaced by former Quaker marketer Jill Casebury.

Birds Eye launches £5 giveaway promotion

Birds Eye, the Unilever-owned frozen food giant, is giving away £5 notes in special packs as part of a £50,000 promotion to reinforce its "real food" positioning.

The Fighting for Real Food promotion, which is launched this week, aims to raise awareness of the brand's health credentials and also the promise that there are no artificial colours or flavourings in its products.

The campaign, which has been created by marketing communications agency Billington Cartmell, will see 10,000 £5 notes put into special packs of Birds Eye frozen peas, fish, curries, ready meals and burgers. It will use the strapline: "We don't put colours or flavours into our food – so you'll only find real £5 notes in our packs."

The agency has created point-of-sale material and trade advertising to support the promotion. There will also be a door-drop campaign



Birds Eye: Picks new md

that will target 2 million families and will offer coupons for Birds Eye products.

Unilever launched a revamp of the Birds Eye brand last year after it carried out a review of the ingredients in its products, called "Project Store Cupboard". It has reformulated a number of products to remove additives.

It also updated the logo and packaging and appointed Bartle Bogle Hegarty to handle the advertising (*MW* December 18, 2003), which has developed the "We don't play with your food" strapline. Birds Eye works with HHCL/Red Cell on its Captain Birds Eye children's campaigns.

Analysis

The party's over for online gambling



Missing the jackpot? PartyGaming, which owns PartyPoker, has seen its share value plummet

The chips are down for online gambling company PartyGaming, which saw its share value cut by almost a third in one day last week, amid fears about its optimistic growth forecasts and heated debate about the industry's marketing strategy.

PartyGaming, which recently stunned the market in one of the biggest flotations the City for years, owns the world's biggest poker website, PartyPoker. But its collapse has betrayed a lack of confidence in the future of the online gambling sector. During the third quarter of 2004, the industry grew by 24 per cent, leading to predictions that the market would double in size during 2005 and follow that boom with increases of 50 per cent in 2006 and 30 per cent in 2007.

However, PartyGaming has triggered panic by revealing that during the first two months of the third quarter its rate of growth was just four per cent. PartyGaming has also revealed that the average yield – or spend – per player was decreasing faster than expected as new customers proved to be more cautious gamblers. Fresh gamers are also using different sites and playing less regularly.

With the growth of the industry stalling, the latest events could herald a change in online casinos' marketing operations, with a shift in emphasis to retention of gamers as much as acquisition. Industry observers agree that the "land grab" among online poker sites may be slowing, with the marketing mix changing and efforts being refocused on retaining customers, and encouraging them to play more often.

Richard Segal, chief executive of PartyGaming, which already spends about 30 per cent of its revenue on marketing, said the company will adopt a "rifle, not shotgun" approach to its future marketing.

Guy Norwell, account director at Mustoe Merriman Levy, the UK agency for online poker company PokerStars, says the advertising blitz earlier this year is over. He describes PartyPoker's spend as "totally disproportionate" to the number of customers it would have attracted during the campaign.

Norwell, along with other observers, also believes that much of PartyGaming's marketing efforts may have been aimed as much at creating a buzz in the City prior to the flotation as it was about attracting new customers. "It spent megabucks, but it wasn't about building the consumer base – it was mainly done for the City," says one commentator. Norwell also believes that another high-profile name in the process of preparing to float, 888.com, may also have aimed its advertising at the financial companies.

Whatever the benefits of, and reasons behind, this year's high-profile campaigns, it seems that retention is now the priority of the casino operators.

PartyGaming group marketing director Vikrant Bhargava says that three years ago the focus was on acquisition of players, but now the company has to strike a balance and acquisitions must be cost-effective. Despite PartyGaming's share value shock, there is plenty of room for the market to grow. In the US last year, 40 million people played poker, but only 5 million of these took part online. Bhargava adds that the expected relaxation of UK laws governing advertising regulations for casino operators could further cloud marketing activity, with companies potentially given the opportunity to build their brands using different media, such as television, for the first time.

Jonathan Harwood
Insight, page 38

Copyright of Marketing Week (UK) is the property of Centaur Communications. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.