

jobs to the ones I had already done. I had to work very hard to establish an external network to help my career. Furthermore, private equity

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firms typically assume that big company executives require a small village of people to support them and that they will struggle in environments which require them to work with fewer resources and less market data. So initially, when engaging with businesses directly or via search firms, be prepared to pick out nuggets from your career which help demonstrate an ability to adapt your style, your working practices and your aptitude to manage resources in smaller environments.

Embedding digital capability continues to be a focus for many businesses. Even the food manufacturing sector is catching on, trying to capitalise on the 'buy now' culture, which is so pervasive in the UK today. What is Gü up to in this area?

I recognised early on that a typical Gü customer is very connected online and engages in dialogue about our brand and our products, as well as those of our competitors, on social media networks and other online forums. Therefore, we've made an enormous investment in digital in the UK and overseas with 20 percent of our total A&P budget now being spent in the digital area. We really believe that it has a huge role to play in building awareness of the brand and recruiting people to the brand. And it's not necessarily us pushing the message out, but rather our customers talking about our products through community chat rooms or our Facebook page etc. Judging by the web content there is real passion for the Gü brand, we have a lot of brand ambassadors. We have a team that works 24/7, creating content or responding to dialogue all of the time, and they are very good at keeping people engaged with the business.

Although we have a large number of social media followers and online advocates, we're aware that there is a lot more we can do in this area. Specifically, we're researching whether or not this online activity actually translates into a sale; that's really important for us to know, because we don't currently use online as a way to sell. We're still reliant on traditional grocery channels, so we're keen to learn more about how digital is impacting that model, and how we might seek to connect the two.

Brands seeking to gain significant wins last year were able to be creative around the Olympics and the Jubilee celebrations. How did Gü fill the void left by these global events?

I think we've actually had a bigger and better innovation program this year, offering a series of new products. We've launched a Gü York Cheesecake, for example, and the reaction to that has been very positive. Last year we did an on-pack 'win sixty diamonds' campaign for the diamond jubilee, which was hugely successful, but this year we think we've done even better. Gü turned ten in the summer and we gave our customers the chance to come up with an idea for a ten year anniversary Gü Pud; the inventor also received a percentage of the profits made from sales of their creation. The reaction to that campaign was bigger than the response we had to the jubilee promotion.

Did you do anything as a company to celebrate your anniversary?

We're organised a big company picnic, where our chef created puddings for everyone to try and we played games outdoors etc. We had Boris Johnson visit our factory in May to launch a fund for the London Enterprise Panel, and he used us as an example of one of London's most successful businesses over the last decade, growing from London to become a multinational company, but still based in London and providing jobs for people living in London.

We also have a number of other press events planned this year.

What are the strategic focuses for Gü over the next months?

Developing new market opportunities and hiring people with international experience who can help us get into new markets and find us new opportunities beyond the UK. We want to continue building our distribution base in the USA; we launched into Canada and Denmark this summer, so those markets will become a big focus for us. I think innovation continues to be important. We're a lifestyle product, so we need to keep coming up with new ideas that will keep customers engaged and keep us ahead of private label, as well as our other competitors. Finally, I think as we grow we want to try and become more efficient and get more out of our manufacturing facility, making sure that we're able to satisfy a greater demand in new countries.

UK market update



In early October, it was confirmed that during Q2, the UK economy had grown at its fastest rate in three years and consumer confidence was at its highest in six years. These figures are obviously good news for the sector, especially with Christmas just round the corner. Consumer industry analysts Verdict Retail are predicting a £1.95 billion increase in Q4 spending compared to 2012, which would make it the best Christmas for UK retailers since 2007. Spending is likely to be focused on food and groceries, but homewares, furniture, and DIY may also experience growth after a prolonged period of decline. Companies remain cautious however, in the knowledge that prices are still rising faster than wages and, for many consumers, purse strings remain tight.

Talent acquisition, innovation and building digital capability remain strategic priorities for our clients seeking to capitalise on this long awaited, yet tentative growth in the UK.