

BREWING SUCCESS

Having launched a new visual identity for the brand last year, Ireland's leading hot beverage company Bewley's has gone from strength to strength over its 175 years. From adventurous beginnings, to a global phenomenon, IF&CR speaks to managing director Jim Corbett about the company's plans for higher grounds.

With over 4,000 outlets countrywide selling their products, Bewley's is the largest and most recognised fresh coffee and tea brand in Ireland and a leading provider of tea, coffee and hot beverage solutions to the foodservice industry.

Understandably, many of Bewley's customers saw trade decline in 2009, so the company's focus was primarily centred on reducing costs and delivering better margins for our customers throughout the business.

This strategy included introducing a new visual identity to create more recognition and consideration of the brand and ultimately drive greater purchasing of Bewley's products.

"The new brand identity was carefully and meticulously developed and we believe it is a fitting contemporary expression for Bewley's, which is distinct, has a particular panache and importantly, has relevance for our consumer market," explained Jim.

"We also launched a new refreshed website, www.bewleys.com. A key objective of the site was to make it easier for our foodservice operators to maximise profits from hot beverages in their outlets by sharing our company's expertise."

A wide range of information in relation to complete hot beverage solutions is presented online including detail on equipment, products and professional coffee service tips from the Bewley's Barista Team. Operators can use the site to sign up for a free, confidential, Business Healthcheck which involves an experienced Bewley's consultancy team visiting a site, carrying out an audit of the outlet's hot beverage offer and making specific recommendations for improvements to boost sales and profitability.



Jim (right) at Catex 2009

Last year also saw Bewley's selected by Topaz Energy as their supplier for fairtrade certified coffee and tea in all Topaz Restore and Express stores throughout Ireland, as well as partnering with BWG to introduce an exclusive Fairtrade Coffee to Go programme across their Mace and Maxol estate.

Jim believes the forecourt and convenience sector is vitally important to the company's progress.

"Many international C-store operators look to Ireland for ideas on best practice and innovation. For Bewley's, the forecourt and C-store outlets represent an important point of contact for our coffee and our brand. The growth of the food-on-the-go market is not a passing fad – and coffee is a major footfall driver within this market. In recent research,



Bewley's MD, Jim Corbett

interview

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conducted by Bewley's, over 40 per cent of respondents stated that coffee was the main purpose for visiting a forecourt. This sector has afforded remarkable growth over the past ten years."

Investing in new product development was also a key focus during 2009, with Bewley's launching Jet Black - a high caffeine coffee drink that contains at least 50 per cent more caffeine than standard coffee.

"It is a first to market innovation that we developed to satisfy the growing consumer demand for products that give more energy

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on the go. From a retailer point of view Jet Black represents a higher margin alternative to carbonated energy drinks.

Jim reveals that there is a strong male bias within the coffee-to-go market, but the hot beverage needs of the younger female cohort still need to be satisfied.

"Last September, we launched a new range of Speciality Teas to meet the needs of this consumer group. In a recent study by Bewley's 40 per cent of participants said they drink speciality teas every day, with nearly half of these drinking it once or twice a week. The new range of Speciality Teas for forecourt operators drives new profit opportunities with the rising consumption of speciality teas, as even on-the-go consumers prioritise healthy eating and lifestyle choices.

"We also recently re-launched Chocolait, our Fairtrade certified hot chocolate drink. This has proved a very popular product with the school-going teenage consumer that routinely visits a forecourt or convenience store during their lunch break or on the way home.

"Chocolait is uniquely milk based, resulting in a better taste," describes Jim. "When Chocolait is part of the product mix; retailers typically achieve more than a 10% contribution to their overall hot beverage sales mix. Our current Chocolait product requires the presence of a Franke Spectra machine. However our innovation team are currently developing a Chocolait sachet to facilitate those operators that don't have this coffee machine on site."

Boasting an impressive list of forecourt and convenience clients,

Bewley's was the first company to introduce fresh bean to cup coffee in a self-service format in the convenience sector.

"As category champions, we have lead the way in driving sales within the sector on behalf of our key customers in the trade including Musgrave's, Topaz, Mace, Maxol, Spar, Londis, Gala, and many more independent retailers," says Jim.

The highest standards of quality are essential to Bewley's, so the company offer a dedicated Quality Compliance Programme for operators, led by Training and Standards Manager Maria Cassidy.

"Unsurprisingly our research reveals that the taste/quality of coffee is the primary trigger and indeed barrier influencing the purchase of hot beverages," outlines Jim. "For this reason, it is essential that we protect the quality of the coffee served in-store."

Jim attributes the brand's success to their focus on one final outcome – that customers enjoy increased profits, and that their customers in turn enjoy outstanding coffee.

"Foodservice operators have a wide choice of where to buy a case of coffee. We

go way beyond this; providing comprehensive coffee programmes including a full range of hot beverages, best-in-class equipment and service solutions, free POS, staff training and quality auditing," lists Jim.

Although many c-store operators reported trade declines in 2009, Jim reveals that, intriguingly, the volume of coffee consumption is only down -6% / -7% on average in the sector, demonstrating that the consumer still wants their daily cup of tea or coffee in a place and at a time that is convenient from them.

"The consumer expectation on price and value has been heightened and they simply will not pay for poor quality hot beverages. In Bewley's, we have seen no evidence of consumers trading down in quality; of interest is the fact that no customer of ours has switched from a Fairtrade coffee offering, demonstrating again that consumers will not sacrifice quality, and indeed their ethical inclinations in the recession."

A key focus for Bewley's this year is maximising the value of retail unit and space for their retailers and offer tailored branded solutions for our key customers.

"We want to ensure that units are merchandised in a fashion that is inviting for consumers and extracting as much value as possible for retailers. Our intention is to over-deliver on our objectives for key customers to ensure that Bewley's remains the preferred choice for coffee drinkers on the go.

"I think we will all see a period of entrenchment and consolidation over the next 2-3 years. Our marketing team is currently developing new cost effective offerings to enable our customers to delivery fresh coffee, even in a recessionary environment," concludes Jim. ■

