



Drinking It In

Alchemy Cordials is adding a distinctive flavour to the beverage industry with its innovative, natural products and its unique, understanding perspective.

Images by Fullframe Photographics

From its beginnings as a market stall selling homemade cordials back in 1997, Alchemy Cordials has grown into a prominent player in the beverage industry. As a family business with a focus on natural, flavoursome products for use in cafés, restaurants, bars, delicatessens, and supermarkets, Alchemy Cordials is a well-respected and -regarded manufacturer and marketer of naturally flavoured beverages.

The CEO Magazine sat down with Alchemy's Managing Director Malcolm Lack to discuss how this family business has evolved and matured over the years.

The CEO Magazine: What are Alchemy's core values?

Malcolm: I think our core values are centred on the fact that we are obsessed with flavour. Our core values are honesty, integrity, and being candid. We're a people factory; we focus on developing people to their full potential, which plays a key role in our core values. Openness, candidness, allowing people to be who they really are,

and integrity are very important to our core values.

Looking ahead to the next 12 to 18 months, what are your plans in terms of expansion and growth?

We'll be on our never-ending quest to positively impact peoples' lives through beverages. In the future, there will be some products that we produce and some markets that we enter that will make a big difference to the way people live their lives and the experiences they have.

What would you say are the key things that you and the Australian Beverages Council have achieved since you've joined Alchemy?

We represent \$7 billion worth of industry at the Australian Beverages Council. We take on caffeine levels in beverages, sugar intake, and obesity in children. Being an advocate for the non-alcoholic beverage industry is a big job. It involves lobbying government and making sure that all we do is received in a favourable light and understood,

and that the consumer has the correct information to make an informed decision.

When I joined the Beverage Council, it was a very reactive organisation. An issue would present itself in the media and then the Beverage Council would go about defending it. However, we've done a really good job of being proactive, so we jump on the front foot and we're addressing issues before they even make it into the public domain. Being a proactive leader in the industry is a big part of what we do and is one of the most important things that we do for society.

In terms of operational activities, why do you think it's important to work with key partners to build strong relationships?

I'm in the manufacturing business. I can't make anything without the help of other people. It's about forming relationships for the long term. If my supply partners are successful, I'm going to be successful, and consequently my clients whom I deal with are going to be very successful. It's about sharing your experience and your contacts where you can. >

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If everyone in your circle and supply chain is successful, who's going to be upset about that? I sometimes think the supply chain and suppliers are under-valued, because they can make or break a company. Sometimes I just need a hand, for whatever reason; and if I have a good relationship with them, then they're going to help me out when I ask. It's about creating a great dynamic and a two-way reciprocal relationship that meets everyone's needs.

In the 13 years that you've been in the industry, what sorts of changes have you seen?

Consumers are much smarter than they were 10 years ago; I think the consumer knows a lot more about what they want. You have to be very targeted and specific in the message that you send to the consumer so you don't get lost in the big scheme of things. I think as the years have gone by and business has got tougher, businesses have to get smarter.

If we go back to the supply chain, I think people value the supply chain and the relationship they have with their partners more and more. I think the relationship value has become more of a focal point, and those businesses will become more important.

Also, I think Generation Y has forced people like me to behave differently and to offer different things. Is that good or bad? I don't know; I think it is what it is. But what it's done is made businesses' interaction with their employees a lot better. If I want to keep you interested, I have to be smarter as a business and I have to be on my toes. Also, I think employees knowing more about what they want has helped make businesses stronger in the long run.

Is Alchemy a business that you see your family and children becoming involved in?

I don't know. At the moment, my two boys think it's really cool that Dad owns a cordial factory; but they think the coolest person in

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- Malcolm Lack



this organisation is the guy who drives the forklift. Who knows what the future holds. My boys are 20, maybe 30, years away from being mature enough to run a business, and in 30 years time I'll be 74. Alchemy is already one big family, just not linked by blood.

You operate in a unique management style. How have you honed and shaped your management style?

I guess it's just practice. I have great support at home. My wife allows me to do this, and without her I wouldn't be anything. She's as much an integral part of my professional life as anyone else I deal with.

I think you've got to be curious. If you ask the right questions, learn how to ask further questions, learn how to have a thirst for understanding, and get people to like you, then they'll want to help you. People love helping people. The biggest gift of all is allowing yourself and those around you to be themselves, without judgement.

I've sat on both sides of the fence: as an employee and now as a business-owner and employer. I'd like to think that that's helped a little bit. But certainly an understanding perspective has been the most valuable thing that I have learned over the years.

The second most valuable thing is learning how to work with that



and use it to your advantage. You need that understanding perspective and that knowledge that we're going to look at a set of data and have two different ideas about what it means. But neither of us is right or wrong; it's just that the way we've been brought up as kids and the experiences that we've had have led us to view things differently.

What would you say have been the most important lessons you've learned over the years?

I think it's been about experience, making mistakes, and embracing failure. It's about not being married to your ideas; accepting that someone else's view and perspective can shape your ideas; and being brave enough to be collaborative, involving people, and giving them the authority to fail as well.

It's a never-ending quest for self-improvement. It's a thirst and hunger to be better than you were yesterday—and that you're going to be better tomorrow. •



SAY HELLO TO CANON AUSTRALIA'S NEW HIGH PERFORMANCE WORKPLACE

Canon Australia recently marked a significant milestone by moving to its new high performance headquarters in Sydney's Macquarie Park. The brand, which lives by the ethos 'inspiring people to achieve more', has taken a page out of its own book by developing a workplace which empowers its employees to be more flexible and agile.

The new high performance workplace was designed following extensive research, including an observational study to identify how people need to work in different ways and environments. This new way of working enables bigger and better ideas, whilst also unlocking greater efficiency, productivity, and mobility through Canon's solutions. This framework reflects the reality of Work 3.0, recognising that the way we work, the environment we work in, and the technologies we use, are all constantly evolving.

Canon believes that true high performance is achieved by considering what people need to perform in terms of their physical workspace, virtual environment, individual needs, culture, and processes. Canon's new workplace provides a collaborative environment, providing employees with the flexibility to work in a way that suits their individual style and needs at any given time, driving a culture that embraces both imagination and creativity.

"A change to our work environment has provided a powerful opportunity to increase employee engagement and create a catalyst for cultural change. With a clear strategy and thoughtful design, we've successfully created a workplace which we believe brings a distinct competitive advantage," said Mr. Taz Nakamasu, Managing Director, Canon Australia.

"At Canon, we are passionate about our people and strongly believe in the power of inspiring both creativity and imagination in all areas of our business, from our products to our employees."

Mr. Taz Nakamasu, Managing Director, Canon Australia.



If you would like to find out how you could increase productivity and improve business processes, contact Canon on 1300 730 959 or visit canon.com.au/Work3

