

Supplier News

Irish suppliers get introduction to U.S. market

SAN DIEGO — Ireland has more to offer the United States market than shamrock charms and plush leprechauns.

That was evident from a visit by Irish manufacturing executives to the NACDS Marketplace Conference. The trip, which was made under the auspices of the Enterprise Ireland trade development agency, allowed the suppliers to assess American prospects for a variety of products that includes chemical-free baby wipes, natural skin care products and cushions that double as sun shades.

The executives toured the trade show floor and met retailers as a prelude to possibly having their own booth at next year's Marketplace. Their participation developed from a meeting between Ann Marie Maxwell, manager of consumer products for Enterprise Ireland, an agency of the Irish government, and National Association of Chain Drug Stores vice president of meetings and international programs Terry Arth at last year's conference. Consultant Robert Coopman accompanied the visitors as a liaison.

Noting that health and beauty aids dominate the show floor at Marketplace, Enterprise Ireland senior development adviser Ed Conway said the H&BA categories allow for the kinds of innovation that Irish manufacturers have successfully exported around the world. Demand for niche H&BAs "suits the creativity of the Irish," he said.

And, Maxwell added, Enterprise Ireland will only lend its support to suppliers of innovative products.

One such product, WaterWipes, was described at Marketplace by Ed McCloskey, chairman and chief executive of manufacturer Irish Breeze, as the world's first chemical-free baby wipe. The wipes' cleansing agent, which is 99.9% water and 0.1% fruit extract, brings a novel offering to "a mature, commoditized category in which everybody's killing each other trying to give things away for free on both sides of the Atlantic," said McCloskey.

WaterWipes carry a price tag that is double that of other wipes, but that helps them stand out in a big category that he said is "remarkably lacking in segmentation." Women in the United States have already learned about the product in European chat rooms and have asked where it can be bought, he noted.

Also tapping into the growing interest among U.S. consumers in products free from harmful chemicals is the elave hair and skin care line from Ovelle Pharmaceuticals. Demand for the line is growing as people are increasingly exposed to harsh chemicals and environments that dry out skin, said Ovelle

chief executive Dave Mulhall. The products, which are free of soap, colors, phthalates, lanolin, perfume, parabens, sodium laureth sulfate, alcohol and formaldehyde, are suited for eczema and psoriasis sufferers as well.

Elave products have already cracked the U.S. chain drug market by winning shelf space in the Look Boutique at Walgreen Co.'s Duane Reade stores in New York. "We've dipped our toe in the market and we very much want to understand how it works," Mulhall said in San Diego. "We're over here investigating the rest of the marketplace."

Also already in the United States is the Cush n Shade, a portable cushion/sun shade that can either be attached to a chaise longue or beach chair, or used directly on the sand or by the pool. American distribution was initiated earlier this year when the product received placement in 400 Bed, Bath and Beyond outlets, where the Cush n Shade has sold so well that the retailer will carry the product in all of its 1,000 locations next year.

Because of its dual function as outdoor furniture and a sun protection product, the item can fit in the general merchandise and sun care sections of drug chains, said Jamie Jenkinson,

Cush n Shade Ltd. vice president of U.S. sales and operations. "It's a unique choice as a seasonal promotional item," he said.

American drug chains, the manufacturers learned at the conference's Meet the Retailer program, want novel products and incremental sales from

bring category growth? We believe that answer is also yes."

WaterWipes, elave and the Cush n Shade are already ensconced in Boots Drug Stores Ltd., which Jenkinson noted is regarded as the CVS or Walgreens of Europe. "Boots' customers' needs are very similar to U.S. customers' needs," he

Hartig Drug, Hi-School Pharmacy, Kinney Drugs, Lewis Drugs, Navarro Discount Pharmacies, Thrifty-White Pharmacy and USA Drug.

"Everybody we've visited has had the same take on this," said Coopman. "You don't want to start with the Walgreens and CVSs of the world. You want to get some traction with the Kerr Drugs of the world."

Said Mulhall, "We're not going to take the United States by storm. It's all about managing expectations and understanding that there's got to be a series of small steps, and if you're going to commit yourself to the U.S. market you're in for the long haul. Overnight successes take years. Pipe dreams are one thing, but you have to put a lot of work into achieving them."

Conway emphasized that as small as Ireland is, it is a sophisticated country. "Back home we have an understanding of growth markets," he commented, saying the touring manufacturers saw an exciting new opportunity in the United States.

Coopman said attending Marketplace was a fascinating experience for the contingent. Meet the Market stood out for its potential for contacting scores of retailers in one place.

"NACDS Marketplace is unique," said Maxwell. "We've never seen anything like it."



(Left to right) Ed McCloskey, Dave Mulhall and Jamie Jenkinson

their suppliers. CVS merchandisers revealed that they see 3,000 new SKUs a year, of which three-quarters fail, the suppliers noted.

"We're listening to what's required and looking at our products and seeing how they match up," said Mulhall. "Do we bring innovation? The answer, we believe, is yes. Do we

said. "So the risk factor for a retailer here is low because we've proven ourselves in other major markets."

That sense was reinforced by a positive meeting between the manufacturers and Kerr Drug president and CEO Tony Civello, and a discussion with the Chain Drug Consortium, which includes Kerr, Bartell Drugs,

Marketing campaign touts Dove Men+Care

ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS, N.J. — Three of Major League Baseball's highest-profile personalities are revealing their untold stories and "personal journeys to comfort" in a series of 90-second videos for Unilever's Dove Men+Care line of facial and body washes.

Inspired by the 2010 Dove Men+Care Super Bowl commercial, "Manthem," which featured one man's journey of unsung moments from birth to fatherhood in a montage of scenes set to the "William Tell Overture," the new ad campaign showcases the unsung moments, cherished memories

and personal milestones that helped St. Louis Cardinals first baseman Albert Pujols, New York Yankees pitcher Andy Pettitte and Yankees manager Joe Girardi become, as a Unilever spokeswoman puts it, "comfortable in their own skin — on and off the field."

The campaign kicked off in mid-June with Pujols' video. The Pettitte spot debuted July 9 and the Girardi video premiered on July 15.

Longer versions of the videos and behind-the-scenes footage of Pujols, Pettitte and Girardi at home with their families is available at dovemen+care.com.

"My fans get to see my commitment to the game every time I step onto the field, but that's only a part of who I am as a man," Pujols says. "Dove Men+Care has given me the

Spots feature trio of baseball stars.

chance to share the moments behind my personal journey that have taught me the true meaning of total comfort."

For the first time, Pujols, Pettitte and Girardi reveal the ex-

periences from their childhood, awkward teenage years and other life stages that have led them to a time when they can take others' expectations in stride and define their success in their own terms.

"From Albert playing it smooth the first time he met his wife, to Andy adjusting from life in Texas to the bright lights of New York, each story celebrates the journey that shaped each player into the man he is today," the spokeswoman says.

Unilever marketers say they hope the stories told by the baseball players will inspire consumers to become more confident in themselves.

"Whether it's Albert locked in his batting stance, Andy staring into the catcher's glove or Joe controlling the flow of a game, baseball fans have come to recognize how comfortable these guys are on the diamond," remarks Rob Candelino, marketing director for the company's domestic personal wash business.

"The Dove Men+Care campaign," he says, "takes a different look at these players and shows fans the stories and milestones these men have experienced on their journeys to finding comfort as husbands, dads and friends."

New faces of Johnson Products

LOS ANGELES — Johnson Products Co. (JPC) recently concluded its Great Model Search contest, announcing four winners who will serve as the new faces of its Gentle Treatment and Ultra Sheen brands.

The winners are Jenise Durham of Lawrenceville, Ga.; Jahminah Harris of Detroit; Nicole Hill of Pensacola, Fla.; and Hamidah Ahmad of Zion, Ill. The models, who were selected by a panel of celebrity judges after a nationwide search, were

awarded \$5,000 and a modeling contract.

The contest, a legacy promotion updated by Johnson Products, also celebrated the company's new ownership. Last year the company was purchased from Procter & Gamble Co. by the husband-and-wife management team of Eric and Renee Brown, and it is once again a minority-owned business.

"I am extremely happy to know that the brands of Johnson Products are back in the

hands of people who understand the black consumer market and care about the brands," said JPC founder George Ellis Johnson. "I am confident that Johnson Products is now poised to serve the African-American community's hair care needs to the fullest."

The next Great Model Search presented by JPC will be for men and will launch in February 2011, coinciding with the market introduction of JPC's new Ultra Sheen men's line.