

MARKET WATCH

Have you sat back and considered who your customer will be in eight to 10 years? Take a look at your present staff and the answer may surprise you.

You know that high school kid you have working for you who doesn't call, doesn't show up for work, and has the gall to return to work a couple of days later, wondering why you're upset with him or her? Or perhaps that group of kids who keep their cell phones handy in order to text message during working hours? Maybe it's the ones who seem to have their head phones surgically implanted in their ears, and who don't take them off, even when they're working or perhaps even listening to your instructions? Guess what? Welcome to the customer of the future.

Ten years from now, these kids are going to be the food and beverage industry's prime consumer target. This is the group that may have a young family and is starting out on the adult road of life. This is the group that the offerings in your store must satisfy. This is also the generation that has grown up with technological change as a way of life. And note that it is technological change, not just technology. Because of this they expect constant change, and they adapt to it quickly. Today's younger generation of workers are changing how we communicate and they are changing our written language. The paradox is that this group talks less, but communicates more. They are much more knowledgeable and adapt better than any preceding group of people in history. So the question becomes, how are you going to market to

them tomorrow?

While I don't have the answers, I do think it's time we start looking at this in very creative ways. I suggest we need to carefully examine every new piece of technology as it becomes available, and decide how it would fit into our operations. Consider the self-scanners and RFID technology already available. How do they fit into your operation? Are you ready for a cashless society? Does your staff in each department know everything there is to know about the products you market? How do you and your staff communicate with this new generation?

As an industry we are going to have to work flat out to understand how to meet the needs of this new, growing and dynamic group of consumers. As in every instance of societal change, the operator who is out front will win big from embracing the challenges that change brings.



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Interested in contributing to Market Watch?

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nielsen

	Latest 52 Wks Year Ago				Latest 52 Wks			
	\$ Vol	\$ Vol % Chg	Unit Vol	Units Vol % Chg	\$ Vol	\$ Vol % Chg	Unit Vol	Units Vol % Chg
National Drug+Grocery Banner+Gas+MM+GM+WC+TRU								
TL CHOC	1,116,564,771	7%	1,691,424,198	3%	1,181,165,372	6%	1,717,910,627	2%
TI Chocolate Bars	89,505,515	21%	38,070,829	18%	105,521,957	18%	43,390,484	14%
TI Boxed Chocolate	214,158,736	2%	43,081,127	1%	223,075,581	4%	43,977,044	2%
TL Candy Confections	398,246,243	5%	303,454,347	2%	404,930,427	2%	288,930,274	-5%
GUM	289,116,870	7%	390,519,842	3%	306,385,716	6%	377,990,927	-3%
NAT XNFLD GROCERY BANNER								
TL CHOC	413,336,553	7%	702,356,824	2%	436,903,626	6%	732,794,901	4%
TI Chocolate Bars	41,191,918	19%	17,520,019	16%	46,482,286	13%	19,118,930	9%
TI Boxed Chocolate	52,199,423	-4%	10,253,322	-2%	55,440,992	6%	11,062,100	8%
TL CANCONF	137,606,733	3%	88,420,224	3%	140,244,144	2%	89,369,103	1%
GUM	107,241,940	4%	141,635,411	-1%	113,387,507	6%	137,017,958	-3%
NAT XNFLD DRUG								
TL CHOC	261,251,800	2%	249,764,298	-5%	276,882,690	6%	241,669,847	-3%
TI Chocolate Bars	27,710,531	23%	11,308,812	22%	33,720,146	22%	13,420,254	19%
TI Boxed Chocolate	79,626,022	2%	15,031,181	1%	82,988,033	4%	14,995,000	0%
TL Candy Confections	73,294,354	-1%	51,301,416	-1%	73,012,103	0%	48,817,814	-5%
GUM	43,183,293	-1%	53,372,787	-4%	44,268,116	3%	49,510,726	-7%

Source: Nielsen MarketTrack, National All Channels (Grocery Banner+Drug+MM+GM+WC+Gas Conv) & National Grocery Banner & National Drug 52 Weeks Ending Jan. 20, 2007 & 52 Weeks Ending Jan. 21, 2006.